

# Friends of Westgate Park

*Transforming the Park into a beautiful, diverse bushland setting for locally indigenous species*

November 22, 2013

Places Victoria,  
GPO Box 2428,  
Melbourne Vic 3000

## **Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Project** **Community Engagement: Submission of Friends of Westgate Park**

*Friends of Westgate Park (FoWP) note that Westgate Park lies outside the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area. However, FoWP believe that Westgate Park will play a critical part in providing for the open space needs of the future residents of Fishermans Bend and thereby contribute to their health and wellbeing.*

The *Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area Draft Vision* does not articulate a vision for open space. Generous public open space should be central to the vision and planning of an urban renewal project of this scale. The health and vitality of urban populations depends on such provision. Parkland, urban public spaces, well-treed streetscapes and the connections between them are critical in high and medium density neighbourhoods where apartment living is the norm and private open space scant.

The outdoor recreational needs of a projected population of 80,000 cannot be met through small, incremental additions to the open space network alone. Instead, the plan places an undue reliance on the City of Port Phillip's open space network which is already under pressure from existing demands. FoWP believe that new public open space will be required, as will improvements to the existing open space network. Much of Melbourne's much vaunted liveability derives from far sighted planning and investment in the 19th and early 20th century investment in transport infrastructure and urban parks. Such foresight endowed Port Melbourne with generous recreational reserves, linear parklands and broad street reservations. These reserves have enormous potential, both as a model of open space provision in Fishermans Bend and as open space links from Fishermans Bend to the foreshore and to sites such as Westgate Park, the largest park in the area.

Although outside the FBURA boundary, Westgate Park will become a key open space for the residents of the Fishermans Bend precincts. Therefore the linkages to the Park need to be safe and easy to use. The plan doesn't adequately address the linkages between the precincts and Westgate Park. The proximity to the expanded Port of Melbourne means that these connections will need to be carefully considered to ensure safe and easy access. Consider for example, the residents of the St Kilda Road/ Queens Road precinct, who are unable to access Albert Park Reserve owing to the presence of heavy vehicular traffic and the absence of well-spaced crossings.

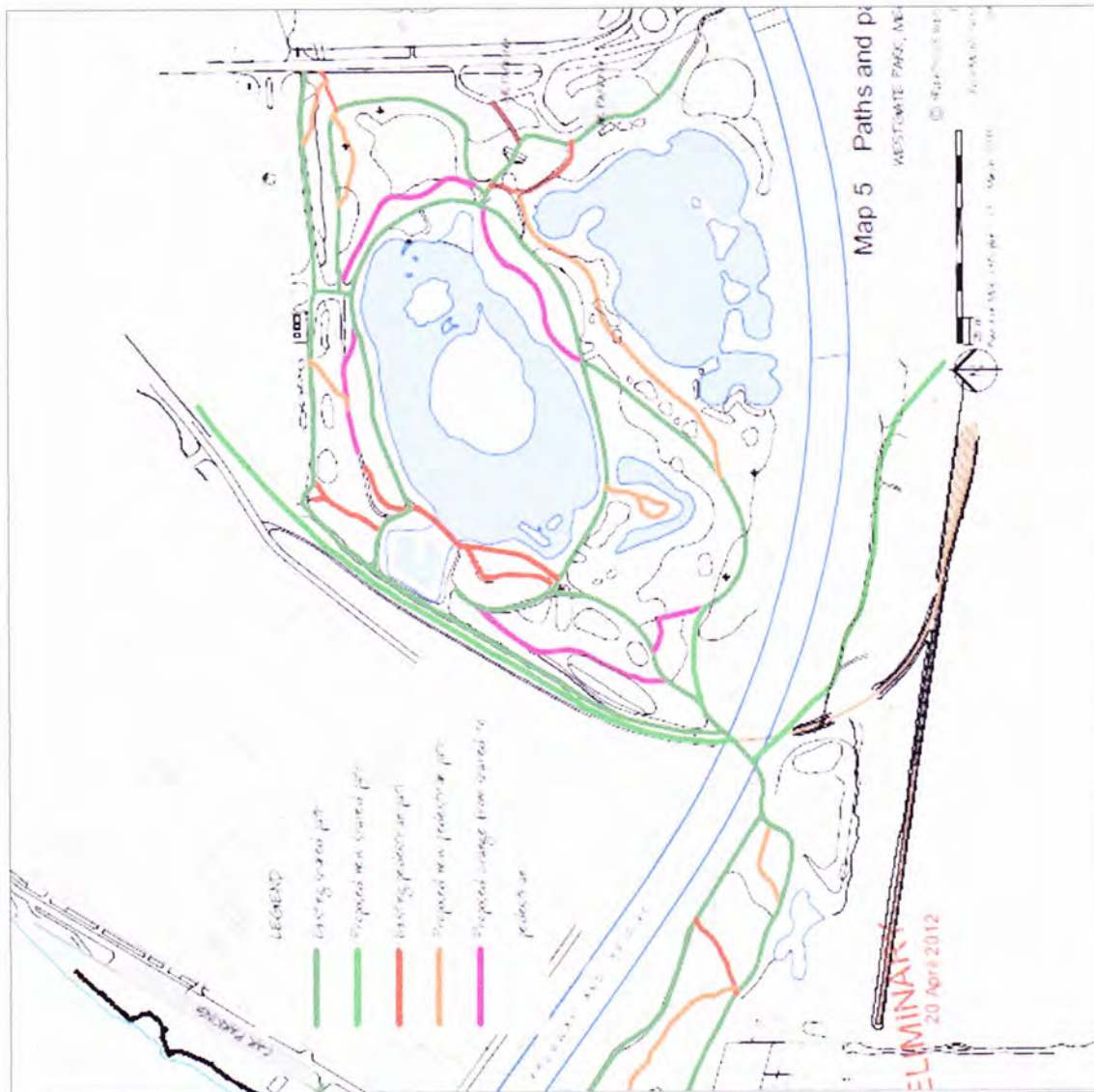
### **Improved linkages from Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area to Westgate Park and the Yarra River**

The Friends of Westgate Park are actively proposing a plan for the currently disused Howe Parade extension. The plan will add an extra 1.1 km of attractively designed shared walking and cycling paths through constructed wetlands to the Yarra River. This plan will result in a more logical, direct and safe, shared use path entry to the park, connection to the river and the punt across the Yarra River to the extensive pathway network of the west. (see the light green line in the plan below)

[www.friends-of-westgatepark.org.au](http://www.friends-of-westgatepark.org.au)

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Westgate Park is the only Park that offers access towards the mouth of the Yarra River and its unique estuarine environment. It offers a very particular experience of urban nature, lying as it does in a dramatic maritime and industrial setting. The disused Webb Dock railway line which travels through the park has the potential to become an important recreational cycling route, while improvements to park facilities through intelligent and sensitive investment of public open space contributions would allow the park to become an important part of the open space network serving the new population of Fishermans Bend.

Similarly, the existing linear open space network of Port Melbourne and Garden City has great potential to link the precincts of Fishermans Bend to Port Melbourne and the foreshore. Further, this sequence of spaces (Port Melbourne Railway Reserves, Garden City Reserve, Howe Parade and Centre Avenue) could form the basis for a network of distinctive Australian indigenous landscaped corridors that tie the developing urban landscape to the indigenous planting of the river mouth and the bay. Indigenous plants of the area are readily available and grown locally by the St Kilda Indigenous Nursery Cooperative (SKINC) which is based within the FBURA. Their use within the precinct should be encouraged.

Contiguous native landscapes and recreational trails, and the amenity and habitat they provide, could then be weaved back into the new urban fabric of Fishermans Bend through the judicious use of appropriate native tree species in the streets and squares of the developing precincts. Significant tree planting in the urban realm of Fishermans Bend will be as critical to the future liveability of the precincts as the provision of public open space in mediating the heat island effect of the dense urban development proposed.

### **Conclusion**

The FoWP look forward to being part of future discussions on strengthening the linkages between the FBURA and Westgate Park.

### **Recommendations**

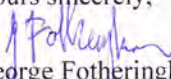
- More open space created within the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area itself
- Better, stronger links for pedestrians and cyclists between Fishermans Bend and Westgate Park to enable future residents to access Westgate Park safely and easily. Such links would include pedestrian and cycle priority at any traffic signals
- Support for shared walking and cycling paths along the Howe Parade extension to encourage walking and recreational cycling
- The redevelopment of Fishermans Bend offers a unique opportunity to reference the history of the wetlands and swamps of the original Fishermans Bend and re-interpret them in a 21<sup>st</sup> century way through the use and incorporation of rain gardens, swales and other such urban stormwater treatments to bring more vegetation into Fishermans Bend and to cleanse stormwater before it reaches the Yarra River
- Use of open space contributions to sensitively upgrade infrastructure in Westgate Park including interpretation, toilets and paths for walking and cycling
- Using the redundant Webb Dock railway line which goes through the Park to create a route for recreational cycling. Cycling paths that are pleasant, safe and away from vehicular traffic are preferred by recreational cyclists
- Using plants indigenous to the region to create themes and linkages across the precincts to Westgate Park, Port Melbourne, the foreshore and the Yarra River

*About the Friends of Westgate Park*

[www.friends-of-westgatepark.org](http://www.friends-of-westgatepark.org)

*Friends of Westgate Park's vision is to transform the Park into a bushland setting for locally indigenous plants and animals – a place where visitors can appreciate richly diverse, natural ecosystems in a beautiful landscape. The Friends aim to share our knowledge about the value and importance of the species that thrived in inner Melbourne before European settlement and to encourage their protection and adoption in gardens and parks elsewhere. So far, the FoWP have planted around 260,000 plants in nine distinct vegetation areas, are cultivating rare and endangered species, propagating most of what is planted and sharing and improving seed stocks with other groups. In 2010 Friends of Westgate Park won the prestigious National Urban Landcare Award.*

Yours sincerely,

  
George Fotheringham  
President