

Elsternwick Park  
Nature Reserve  
Principles and Priorities

# Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve: Principles and Priorities

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# Elsternwick Park North Park Development: Proposed Principles and Priorities

## Executive Summary

The environmentally focused park planned for the site of the old Elsternwick Golf Course is an exciting and visionary decision. The community and other stakeholders have high expectations of the future park and this document is designed to inform concept plans and help realise the vision for the park.

The park vision is underpinned by four core priorities, environment, public amenity, flood mitigation, and water quality. These priorities are supported by the community and other stakeholders and will need to be carefully balanced to achieve optimal outcomes. It is recommended that the council formally adopt these priorities.

Environmental considerations include; the natural history of the area, the inclusion of culturally significant trees, the identification of specific target species for the park and the habitat clusters that will support them. The park is home to many special animals that include several threatened and near threatened species including the eastern great egret and the grey headed flying fox. It is recommended that a formal fauna strategy be developed. A diversity of vegetation and habitat supports the wildlife with wetland systems as a major and key element. Future elements would likely include grassy woodlands with the development of a middle story and native grassy areas. A formal flora strategy should be developed that supports the fauna strategy along with a baseline fauna survey which will provide the basis for evaluating the success of these strategies.

The development of the park also needs to consider light pollution in the park and the effect on wildlife, the impact of feral and pest species such as foxes, gambusia and noisy miners as well as the impact of domestic animals.

The park will provide exceptional public amenity and supports a number of council objectives including Bayside Open Space Strategy and the Open Space and Environment goals of the Council Plan 2017 – 2021. Flood mitigation and water quality have equal priority and solutions need to be creative and employ the best contemporary knowledge to achieve the desired outcomes.

Community ownership of the park during both development and the ongoing management is essential if the vision is to be realised. The Elsternwick Park Association is well placed to have a key role in facilitating this engagement. It is recommended that a committee of management be established as a matter of priority to oversee both the development and long term operation of the park. The committee would include both community and council representatives. A project plan for the park development should be developed and communicated with all stakeholders. The plan would include key deliverables, milestones, responsibilities and timeframes.

# Elsternwick Park North Park Development: Proposed Principles and Priorities

## Document Purpose

The community, the council and other stakeholders alike have high expectations of the park. Bayside City Council Mayor Councillor Laurie Evans described the council decision as “visionary”. The purpose of this document is to inform the concept plans and help realise that vision and ultimately translate that vision into reality.

There will be significant community consultation and input from various stakeholders including Melbourne Water and neighbouring councils before the detailed park designs are finalised. This document is not intended to usurp that input and consultation, but rather to provide considered underpinning principles and priorities that can inform community input and debate.

As this document outlines, there are multiple priorities for the park and not every stakeholder will assess each priority equally. Ultimately, it is likely that there will be compromises between potentially competing priorities.

## Background

Elsternwick Park was once part of an extensive swamp area and is part of the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung clan of the Kulin Nation. European settlement saw the swamp drained and the creation of the Elwood Canal which now allows flow from Elster Creek directly into Port Phillip Bay.

Elster Creek flows through the park and is part of an extensive catchment encompassing parts of four municipalities, the Cities of Bayside, Port Phillip, Glen Eira and Kingston. Generally, Elster Creek is a highly modified waterway, over twenty kilometres in length. For most of this length it has been altered from a natural waterway to underground or surface concrete drains. The section which emerges at the site of the new park is the last remaining section which retains a semi natural state.

The common historic policy of draining of swamps has robbed us of the natural capacity of swamps or wetlands to retain and filter the water in the environment and moderate the impact of flooding. The potential for flooding is further exacerbated by the low lying nature of this area, combined with tidal influences and wind and storm surges.

Works since the 1950s include a water diversion via the Head Street drain, the creation of a lake in the south of the park and a small wetland in the north of the park. Despite the modest size of this wetland, it has become a haven for wildlife.

## Council Decision

In a special council meeting on March 28, 2018, the Bayside City Council voted in favour of “the creation of a passive open space/ environmentally focussed reserve in the area of Elsternwick Park North that is currently occupied by the golf course”.

The mayor, Councillor Laurie Evans labelled this as “a momentous decision for the council...” that “reflects much of what our community is about”. He described the decision as “visionary” and “an opportunity you come across once in a lifetime” (see Appendix 1).



*sun setting over the lake in Elsternwick Park*

## The Vision

While the council’s decision itself was not specific about the “vision” for the park, concepts for this vision had been canvassed prior to the decision. The Elsternwick Park Coalition (now Elsternwick Park Association) widely circulated a vision statement for the park and the council decision is seen as an endorsement of this vision.

“A beautifully designed and maintained native parkland, wetland and urban forest. A place that echoes the beauty of the land before the invasion of concrete and asphalt. A place that provides refuge and tranquillity for people and wildlife ...” (see Appendix 2)

In the words of Dr. Jo Samuel-King, in her speech to councillors before their decision in March “This vision is not one of an ordinary suburban park. Rather it is of something, stunning, unique and extraordinary. It will take the best of Australian landscape designers, architects, water engineers and experts in ecology to design”.



*mayor Laurie Evans sharing the vision for the park at the park opening. July 1<sup>st</sup> 2018*

## Park Priorities

The park vision is based on and encapsulates four core priorities in environment, public amenity, flood mitigation and water quality. These priorities have been widely circulated and there is consensus and commitment to these four priorities from a broad range of stakeholders.

The Elsternwick Park Association has these four core priorities as part of its statement of purpose along with a supporting priority of community engagement. The priorities will need to be carefully balanced to ensure that the park is a success and meets the needs and expectations of the community and other stakeholders. These core priorities are:

### Environment

To provide quality habitats for indigenous plants and animals in Elster Creek, Elsternwick Park and environs. To maintain and improve biodiversity through the use of water, landscape and locally indigenous plants. To provide a refuge for threatened and locally endangered species.

### Public Amenity

To develop and maintain the park with exceptional aesthetic and public amenity. To create diverse opportunities for passive recreation, quiet enjoyment of the park and appreciation of the natural environment.

### Water Quality

To maximise opportunities to enhance water quality, within the park, upstream and downstream, and as water enters Port Phillip Bay.

### Flood Mitigation

To maintain and improve the Park as a flood retarding basin. To maximise effective water management opportunities with a major focus on flood mitigation.

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The council resolution at this stage only identifies “a passive open space/environmentally focussed reserve”. This could potentially take many forms and clarity is required if the park is to realise the aspirations of community groups and stakeholders.

### Key Recommendation 1

*That the council formally endorse these four priorities for the park.*

## Priority 1 - Environment

When designing this park to have an environmental focus, we see the following as important considerations:

### *Natural History*

The vision contemplates a place that “echoes the beauty of the land before the invasion of concrete and asphalt”. To understand what this means, we turn to the records of the early explorers.

John Faulkner an early settler, is recorded in 1835 as commenting on the vista from the schooner “Enterprise” in 1835, *“the knolls, lagoons and swamps ... together with the abundant bird life...filled them with joy”* <sup>1</sup>.

William Thwaites in 1901<sup>2</sup> lamented the loss of swampland near central Melbourne “the home of innumerable water fowl in the early days, and a source of pleasure and beauty...”

We imagine that we can recreate “knolls, swamps and lagoons” that will once again be filled with abundant birdlife. We will have a new source of “pleasure and beauty” and that people can once again be “filled with joy”.

### *Separation Tree*

The Separation Tree was a heritage listed river red gum, located in the Royal Botanic Gardens and was one of two original river red gums that were along the banks of the swampy billabong which now makes up part of the gardens ornamental lake. The tree was a Melbourne landmark and was so named as it was the site where the citizens of the city congregated on 15 November 1850 to celebrate when the news that Victoria was to separate from the colony of New South Wales. It is one of the few trees left in the garden that pre-dates European colonization. It was some 400 years old and was also culturally significant as a site where indigenous tribes met by the Yarra River before European colonisation.

The Royal Botanic Gardens has kindly provided 100 seeds from the separation tree for propagation and ultimate planting in the park and Bayside City Council has previously agreed to their planting in the park.

A fitting planting of these trees that recognises heritage of both pre and post settlement heritage may include a Separation Tree trail within the park.

### *Ngargee Tree*

One of Melbourne's oldest living things is the Boon Wurrung Corroboree Tree, or 'Ngargee' Tree. It is a towering old giant river red gum, thought to be between 300 and 500 years old, and is sacred to the traditional owners. For hundreds of years it has served as a meeting place for the Boon Wurrung people. The Boon Wurrung foundation, through Caroline Briggs, have consented to seedlings of the culturally important Ngargee Tree being grown for planting in the park. A respectful planting of these trees may be incorporated into a Ngargee Tree meeting place.

### *Habitat and Fauna*

To be truly successful in providing habitat for native wildlife, it will be important to engage local experts in biodiversity, to identify specific target species and to design the park in order to meet their particular habitat needs.



*musk faced parrot feeding on flowering gum blossoms in the park*

Friends of Elster Creek already has members with considerable expertise in this area and is keen to be intimately involved with this part of the design.



*sulphur crested cockatoo nesting in a tree hollow in the park*

Dialogue and/or research is required to identify target species for habitat creation. Criteria for target species would include:

- ▶ Listing under threatened species lists
- ▶ Vulnerability to local extinction
- ▶ Potential to use the site (i.e. known presence in the area)
- ▶ Importance in the food chain.
- ▶ Public appeal

Possible target species include; great egret, Nankeen night heron and the grey headed flying fox (all listed as species of significance and known to use the site).

Other fauna that fulfil other criteria outlined above include; southern boobook owl, eastern rosella, eastern spinebill, blue fairy-wren, brown thornbill, silvereye, spotted & striated pardalotes, white-browed scrub-wren and southern water skink



*grey headed flying fox feeding on flowering gum blossoms. a vulnerable<sup>3</sup> and threatened<sup>4,5</sup> species that frequents the park (photograph © Doug Gimesy)*

### Key Recommendation 2

*That a formal fauna strategy be developed including a target species list.*

*Timeframe: 3 months*

### Key Recommendation 3

*That a formal fauna survey be commissioned to establish a baseline against which the success fauna strategies can be assessed.*

*Timeframe: 3 months*

### Park Flora

We propose that plant selection be based on the following principles:

- ▶ New plantings to be local indigenous species  
(some non-local native species may be considered appropriate in some limited situations)
- ▶ Medium term plan to replace non Australian native species and long term plan to replace non locally indigenous species. The plan should consider plants with significant habitat values
- ▶ Planting to be based on rigorous research into the types of plant communities that would have once existed in this landscape prior to white settlement and recreation of these plant communities
- ▶ The establishment of entire vegetation communities
- ▶ Inclusion of rare and threatened species
- ▶ Inclusion of historic seedlings such as the Separation and Corroboree Tree seedlings
- ▶ Design and composition of plantings will be informed by knowledge of existing wildlife habitat on site
- ▶ The involvement of local indigenous nurseries
- ▶ Resilience to climate change

### Diversity of Vegetation

Part of what already makes this area special from a habitat perspective is the combination of a number of diverse vegetation communities including wetlands and grassy woodlands. This is essential to maintain as part of the park development.

### Wetland Systems

Wetland systems is the most important aspect of this site from a habitat perspective and will be an essential and major element of the park development.



*the threatened<sup>6</sup> eastern great egret wading in lake waters*

The extensive wetland and lake systems would incorporate the following features:

- ▶ Broad and gradually sloping wetland edges with extensive areas of shallow water. This is the most productive zone in any wetland and essential habitat for many wetland-dwelling species

- ▶ Extensive island systems as essential and protected breeding sites for many species.
- ▶ Submerged and semi submerged dead trees and logs
- ▶ Ephemeral wetlands
- ▶ Sophisticated wetland management systems that allows wetlands to be drained completely (essential for proper *Gambusia* management and flood preparation)
- ▶ An active system that could include a lake in the North Eastern Corner with a creek with moving water/water falls connecting this to the lower lying wetlands.
- ▶ Maximised aeration of creek in upstream reaches -shallow water, abundant aquatic vegetation and ripple zones
- ▶ Deep sections of creek in downstream reaches



*eastern great egret and white faced heron, both fishing in broad and gradually sloping wetland edges*

The involvement of expert ecologists and wetland system designers will be required. Successful examples of existing wetlands including Mt. St Joseph's Pond, Altona and Trin Warren Tan Boore, Parkville.

### *Grassy Woodlands and Development of Middle Story*

Grassy woodlands were once a key feature of the local landscape. This landscape would include:

- ▶ Extensive planting of appropriate trees with the development of the under-story and ground-layer habitats
- ▶ Unmown grassy areas, ideally with native grasses that are allowed to go to seed- this is important for birds such as the eastern rosella which are these birds are locally endangered and already nesting in the park
- ▶ Areas of minimal disturbance. This is essential for birds such as the eastern rosella and can be achieved with careful design. A particular threat results from incautious and unmanaged foot traffic. Areas of minimal or reduced foot traffic need to be carefully balanced with open and inviting access to the park and needs to be incorporated into the overall park design. Unplanned traffic will result in "goat tracks" habitat destruction and a sub-optimal outcome in the overall aesthetics of the park.
- ▶ Minimal mown turf. While mown turf can sometimes provide visual and practical amenity, it does however, provide very little in the way of valuable habitat, is expensive to maintain and does not provide for biodiversity. Over time it is proposed that areas of mown turf would be slowly reduced and replaced with ground cover with equal or better visual appeal and equal or better amenity for passive recreation. Native turf alternatives are likely candidates and have the advantages of being non-invasive, don't necessarily have to be mown and provide seeds for target species. One example is *microlaena*

stipoides (weeping grass), a particularly attractive lush green grass.



*native weeping grass (microlaena stipoides var. Griffin) lawn at full height (unmown)<sup>7</sup>*

- ▶ Removal of invasive grasses. In particular kikuyu grass is a very troublesome weed on the site outcompetes local species. It spreads via stolons and does not set seed in our region. This means that the control of kikuyu can be relatively effective: isolated areas need only be treated once to remove kikuyu so long as barriers are in place to prevent reinvasion. The arrangement of footpaths as barriers and creation of islands in the wetland will allow for the establishment of indigenous ground layer vegetation free from competition by kikuyu.
- ▶ Provision/creation of nesting sites. While natural hollows are ideal, they take a very long time to develop. The lack of natural nesting is often exacerbated by overzealous arborists. As they saying goes, if you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Well, arborists have chainsaws... There is however a growing body of evidence regarding the effectiveness of artificial nesting boxes in areas. Gio Fitzpatrick a young naturalist has already demonstrated the effectiveness of these nesting boxes on the reserve. We envisage that these

nesting boxes would continue to be used to provide habitat.

- ▶ Indigenous plants, chosen with habitat values in mind. We are keen to harness the expertise of local naturalists and botanists .....

#### Key Recommendation 4

*That a formal flora strategy be developed to specify required habitat communities including those required to support the target species list.*

*Timeframe: 5 months*

#### Absence of Night Light Pollution

The park has fortunately had minimal light pollution which has allowed wildlife to thrive. Among others this has been important for the development of a robust invertebrate population in the wetlands, which is in turn important for the survival of the higher end of the food chain such as the micro-bats that already thrive on the reserve. Bright night lighting is often perceived as providing enhanced night time safety however the demonstrable safety benefits are often minimal while coming with a significant financial and environmental cost. Absence of night lighting in the park will not only provide respite for the fauna but will also be of particular benefit for nocturnal animals such as the Nankeen night heron.



*a southern boobook owl – a night time visitor to the park*

It is possible that there may be a role for some perimeter lighting around the park. In this instance the lighting installed in the adjacent Elwood Canal Linear Reserve provides a good example wildlife friendly lighting.



*wildlife friendly lighting along Elwood a southern boobook owl – a night time visitor to the park*

### *Feral and Pest Animal Control*

#### *Gambusia*

Gambusia (mosquito fish) are an introduced fish that have a devastating effect on native fish and frog species. Mosquitofish were introduced by military and local councils to

control mosquito populations in the 1920s, however there has been no evidence that Gambusia has had any effect in controlling mosquito populations or mosquito-borne diseases<sup>8</sup>. Gambusia are thought to exacerbate the mosquito problems in many areas by outcompeting native invertebrate predators of mosquito larvae. Gambusia are listed as a noxious under Section 75 of the Fisheries Act 1995 (updated 2010). Gambusia holbrooki has been implicated in the decline of at least 9 fish and 10 native frog species<sup>9</sup> By consuming algae-eating zooplankton, they increase the likelihood of algae blooms in the water, reducing the water quality. They are very aggressive, and tend to attack other fish and nip their fins, leading to infection or death. Gambusia significantly inhibit the biodiversity and diminishes the conservation value of Elsternwick Park North more than any other introduced species and represent the highest priority for control. Effective management strategies for Gambusia include having wetlands that naturally dry out from time to time and also, draining wetlands completely. Opportunities for control need to carefully considered as part of the park development.

#### *Noisy Miner*

The noisy miner is notorious for its unrelenting group aggression and belligerent behaviour; the noisy miner often excludes nearly all small birds from the woodland remnants it occupies<sup>10</sup>. Populations of small native birds have been shown to recover strongly with active noisy minor management and should be a priority for the park. Furthermore, as part of the park design, we need to be mindful of the types of environments noisy miners are likely to exploit and revegetate in a way that discourages noisy miner colonisation<sup>11</sup>

#### *Foxes*

Foxes are active in the park and are often spotted in nearby neighbourhoods. Fox scat is often found adjacent to native bird kills. A plan

for fox management needs to be developed as part of the park development. The plan will likely include designing areas of the park as water surrounded islands.



*a juvenile Nankeen night heron taking refuge from predators on one of the small islands in the lake*

#### Domestic Animal Management

A number of the members of the coalition have dogs and love taking their dogs for a walk in the reserve. We are aware, however that the area has been set aside as a reserve, due to its habitat values and the wildlife it supports. With increasing public access, the risk that dogs pose to wildlife will need to be carefully

monitored and managed. Dogs off leash should be restricted to south of Bent Avenue. We propose that the current on-lead status of the park be reinforced with proper attention and signage. The impact of dogs on wildlife be actively monitored and the strategy adjusted accordingly. Consideration should also be given to some areas of the park remaining completely dog free.

#### Key Recommendation 5

*That feral and domestic animal management plan be developed.*

*Timeframe: 6 months*

#### Water Harvesting

The park currently has systems in place for water harvesting. As part of the development of the park, these systems should be reviewed to ensure that they operate as designed. Further, opportunities to expand water harvesting should also be explored.

## Priority 2 - Public Amenity

The public amenity provided, simply by creating an outstanding natural environment cannot be under-estimated.

This supports a number of council objectives including Bayside Open Space Strategy (2012)<sup>12</sup> and the Open Space and Environment goals of the Bayside City Council Plan 2017 - 2021<sup>13</sup>

People will be able to enjoy the reserve in many different ways. Some of these ways will include walking, cycling, picnicking, walking the dog, sitting watching the sunset, reading books, kids playing, and climbing trees.



*red-rumped parrots feeding in the park*

The public will be able to enjoy this reserve via infrastructure that is natural, low key, low impact and fits with the natural environment.

This could include:

- ▶ A walking track that circuits the reserve-with soft, natural surfaces
- ▶ Board walks across wetlands
- ▶ Shared tracks-with porous surface for both pedestrians and low speed, recreational cycling-within the park.
- ▶ Commuter bicycle routes around the edge of the park (along Bent Street and New Street) providing connectivity from the Elwood canal shared bike path up to

the intersection of Glenhuntly Road and Nepean Hwy.

- ▶ BBQ areas and picnic areas.
- ▶ Seats where people can sit
- ▶ North Easter Corner- Volunteer centre- where volunteers can meet/store tools/propagate plants etc
- ▶ Café and/or restaurant, bar, native nursery, community space as is appropriate.

### *Community Involvement*

The community will take “ownership” of the reserve via:

- ▶ Detailed input into the design, construction and maintenance of the park.
- ▶ Hands on activities in the site including volunteering planting, weeding, plant propagation, litter collection, water quality and wildlife surveys etc.
- ▶ Bird watching and wildlife walks
- ▶ School children using the site for environmental education and volunteering
- ▶ Scouts in environmental projects, rogaining, orienteering, volunteering.

### *Communication*

For the uniqueness of the reserve to be properly appreciated, it’s many and varied values will need to be properly communicated to the public. This can be achieved via:

- ▶ Well designed and maintained signs
- ▶ Website
- ▶ Wildlife walks etc.

### *Excellence*

The park should not be just any old suburban park. Rather, it should reflect the best of Australian ingenuity and design. In order to

achieve this, we believe we may need to attract the absolute best, award winning experts in the four areas outlined above as well as in landscape design.

The Elsternwick Park Association is committed to working with the council to help achieve this. A proposal that deserves consideration would be a design competition for the park.

### *Park Access*

Critical to the long term success of the park and realisation of the vision, will be that the park is open and inviting, and that the community can embrace and engage with the park. The open access needs to be tempered by the following considerations:

- ▶ Management of flow of people and foot tracks and prevention of “goat tracks” through more sensitive habitat areas
- ▶ Creation of areas of minimal disturbance
- ▶ Maintaining absence of night lighting
- ▶ Public safety at night
- ▶ Feral animal management
- ▶ Creation of a sense of specialness and place
- ▶ Domestic animal management and control

It is considered that some combination of barriers and fencing will be necessary to achieve this, in both the short and longer term however the exact nature of this needs to be determined.

Consideration may also be given to a proper, feral animal proof fence and the areas that this may encompass. There may however, be technical, cost and aesthetic barriers to a full feral proof fence.

### *A Name*

A new place and a new role deserves a new name. It is envisaged that the name would not apply to whole park, but rather that section of Elsternwick Park that was formerly occupied by the golf course. Our preference is to find an appropriate traditional name to reflect and celebrate the traditional owner’s connection to and custodianship of the area.

We have consulted with elders and traditional land owners about potential traditional names for the area or waterway. At this stage we have been unable to identify a traditional place name and if there were traditional names for the area, then these may well be lost.

Further work needs to be done to identify an appropriate name. Any name should reflect the special nature of the park, its role in enhancing the local environment and as a wildlife refuge, its relationship with the creek and water, and, ideally one that reflects the traditional landowner’s connections with the area.

## Priority 3 - Flood Mitigation

Flooding is a significant issue in most of the Elster Creek catchment area. The downstream risk in the Elster Creek/Elwood Canal catchment has been assessed as 'extreme' with 26,000 properties 'at risk of flooding' of which 2,352 properties are at 'extreme risk'. A co-ordinated approach across the whole of the Elster Creek Catchment is required. We support the work underway across the four local governments and led by Melbourne Water which aims to develop an Integrated Water Management approach to flood mitigation.

Initial investigations by Melbourne Water indicate that there is significant potential to mitigate against flooding with increased storm water retention in the park in the vicinity of 100,000 cubic metres. We understand that Melbourne Water and the councils are assessing the feasibility of this additional retardation capacity in the whole of the park including the area occupied by the current Oval 2. We support measures which will enhance storm water retention as a key consideration in the design of Elsternwick Park.

There are likely to be further opportunities for storm water retention if there is an active system i.e. one that can pump water from low lying areas to keep those areas, artificially free of water, so that there is more room for storm water in times of flood. This forms part of the rationale behind the concept of a new, artificial lake in the North East Corner.

Storm water retention goals and associated earthworks need to be moderated by the need to preserve established mature native trees and areas of significant habitat value.

We note that most if not all extreme rainfall events recorded in the last 130 years have occurred over summer. In fact, all three rainfall events in the last 130 years involving 100ml or more in one day occurred in February (Appendix 4). This means that ephemeral wetlands that are allowed to dry out over summer, if properly designed will provide storm water retention when it is most needed.

Full modelling by water engineers and surveyors who are expert in this field needs to be completed to underpin any proposed works.



*Elsternwick Park in flood, December 2016*

## Priority 4 - Water Quality

We value the commitment made by Bayside Council to set aside this large area to provide a park with world class environmental attributes. Creating healthy waterways will have benefits well beyond the Park itself improving for example, both the habitat for wildlife as well as ensuring people can safely enjoy the beaches at Brighton and Elwood.

Elster Creek transports water along approximately twenty kilometres of concrete drains and culverts, through Elsternwick Park until it is deposited virtually untreated into the Port Phillip Bay. In this process the water in the creek accumulates (and finally deposits) 27 tonne of nitrogen, 4 tonne of phosphorus and some 1,900 tonne of total suspended solids into the waters of Elwood and Brighton<sup>14</sup>. A small wetland of approximately 0.4 hectares provides some bio-filtration however its size is inadequate and much water is diverted around the wetland. Large scale areas of wetland are generally the most effective in delivering clean water.

As highlighted by local resident and water engineer, Ross Hardie, in his submission to Bayside Council :

“Port Phillip suffers from urban storm water pollution. That pollution impacts on aquatic life and the Port Phillip ecosystem, and results in the closure of beaches and loss of recreation opportunities. A major source of that pollution is Elster Creek. The 3-month flow events that transport and deliver 90% of the contaminants from the Elster Creek catchment are currently directed to Port Phillip via the Head Street drains and receive no storm water treatment”.

“An opportunity exists to effectively treat urban storm water from the catchment by

expanding the size and function of the wetlands at Elsternwick Park North”.

Water sensitive urban design is a holistic approach to planning and designing urban areas, this incorporates the capture of stormwater runoff and reduces the harm potentially contaminated runoff causes to our rivers and creeks. Water sensitive urban design principles will be important in planning how the park best meets the challenges of improving water quality. Specific feature that may be incorporated into the park include sediment ponds, wetlands and swales<sup>15</sup>.

Achieving the optimum outcome will need to involve the expertise of water engineers such as Ross Hardie, so that this time, the design is done properly and water from ordinary rain events is allowed to pass through and be cleaned by the wetland system in Elsternwick Park. Full water modelling would determine the volume of water that the park can manage however, to the extent that it is possible, this volume should be maximised and the proportion that bypasses the wetland via the Head Street or other diversions can be minimised.



*the shy and reclusive Nankeen night heron in the waterway at dusk. the night heron is listed in the Advisory List of Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria 2013*

## Park Development

“Where to from here...”

### Community Ownership

For the park to realise the aspirations of the community, the council and other stakeholders there will need to be significant community ownership. This will not be achieved by the council developing the park in their image and then handing it over to the community.

Both the development and the ongoing management of the park needs to be a shared responsibility between the community and the council and reflect the broad and diverse range interest groups.

The park opening on July 1 2018 is symbolic of that partnership where the council officers, councillors and the community worked together to plan an opening celebration for the park.



*some 2-300 people came together to celebrate the park opening*

### Community Representation

The Elsternwick Park Coalition was a broad based community group established to advocate for the park on behalf of a broad range of individuals and their respective interests and groups. That coalition has

recently incorporated and become the Elsternwick Park Association.

The Elsternwick Park Association is so named as it aspires to be something more than a friends group with plans to be an active partner with the council in park planning and management.



*community members, councillors and other stakeholders jointly celebrating the park opening*

Key roles for the Elsternwick Park Association in achieving this include:

- ▶ To lead community representation and provide a focused and coherent voice for those advocating for the park. The association, like the coalition before it, has a diverse range of members who represent upwards of 15 different organisations and interests. (see Appendix 3). The Association also enables single point of contact on park matters.
- ▶ To coordinate and provide expertise and knowledge that complements the expertise of the council and other stakeholders such as Melbourne Water. Specifically, this includes expertise in indigenous flora and fauna, wetlands and

habitat, biodiversity, water quality and bio-systems. Most importantly there is an active role in working with council in developing concept and final plans for the park.

- ▶ To work in partnership with council both during development and then ongoing management of the park.
- ▶ Nominating community representatives, to work with the council
- ▶ Leading community involvement and participation in the park, both during the shorter term park development and the longer term ongoing management of the park is project. This is essential if this park is to be the success we all hope for.
- ▶ Providing communication and feedback to the various stakeholders and members

### Key Recommendation 6

*That a committee of management be established to oversee the development and long term operation of the park. That the committee have community, council officer and possibly councillor representation.*

*Timeframe: 1 month*

### Project Planning

A comprehensive project plan is required to establish key deliverables, milestones, key responsibilities, community consultation and a timeline for development.

There has undoubtedly been planning at a level within the council. The development of these plans however has not had the necessary community inputs and they have not been well communicated with the community and other stakeholders.

### Key Recommendation 7

*That the committee of management develop a project plan for the park development. Including key deliverables, milestones and responsibilities.*

*Timeframe: 2 months*

## Appendix 1

### *Council Decision*

Council Decision: Special Council Meeting, March 28, 2018

**Moved: Cr Heffernan**

**Seconded: Cr Martin**

That Council:

1. discontinues golf at Elsternwick Park from 1 July 2018;
2. supports the creation of a passive open space/environmentally focussed reserve in the area of Elsternwick Park North that is currently occupied by the golf course;
3. develops a management and maintenance plan to make the site accessible for public use;
4. commences work to develop a plan to implement a passive open space/environmentally focussed reserve by engaging with key stakeholders including Melbourne Water, City of Port Phillip, City of Glen Eira and negotiate funding arrangements and partnerships regarding planning, capital works improvements and ongoing site management and maintenance ; and
5. engages with key community groups to seek feedback on the concept plans once a redevelopment concept plan is developed for a passive open space/environmentally focussed reserve in the area of Elsternwick Park North.

## Appendix 2

### Elsternwick Park North Vision

# A Vision for Elsternwick Park North

A beautifully designed and maintained native parkland, wetland and urban forest.  
A place that echoes the beauty of the land before the invasion of concrete and asphalt.  
A place that provides refuge and tranquillity for people and wildlife.

The lifeblood of the park is water. Where ever there is water, native wildlife flourishes. More than that, water also provides an oasis for people. Lakes and wetlands will extend throughout the whole area. Amongst these lakes and wetlands there will be islands where birds could nest. Some islands will be accessible via board walks and stepping stones, others will be accessible, only by boat. The lake edges will be soft and natural, with plenty of water plants and life within the lakes.

There will be quiet areas, where people can sit and watch the sunset, the water and wildlife. There will be other areas where families can gather, picnic and have barbeques. Little jungle like areas will create imaginary worlds for children to play and explore.

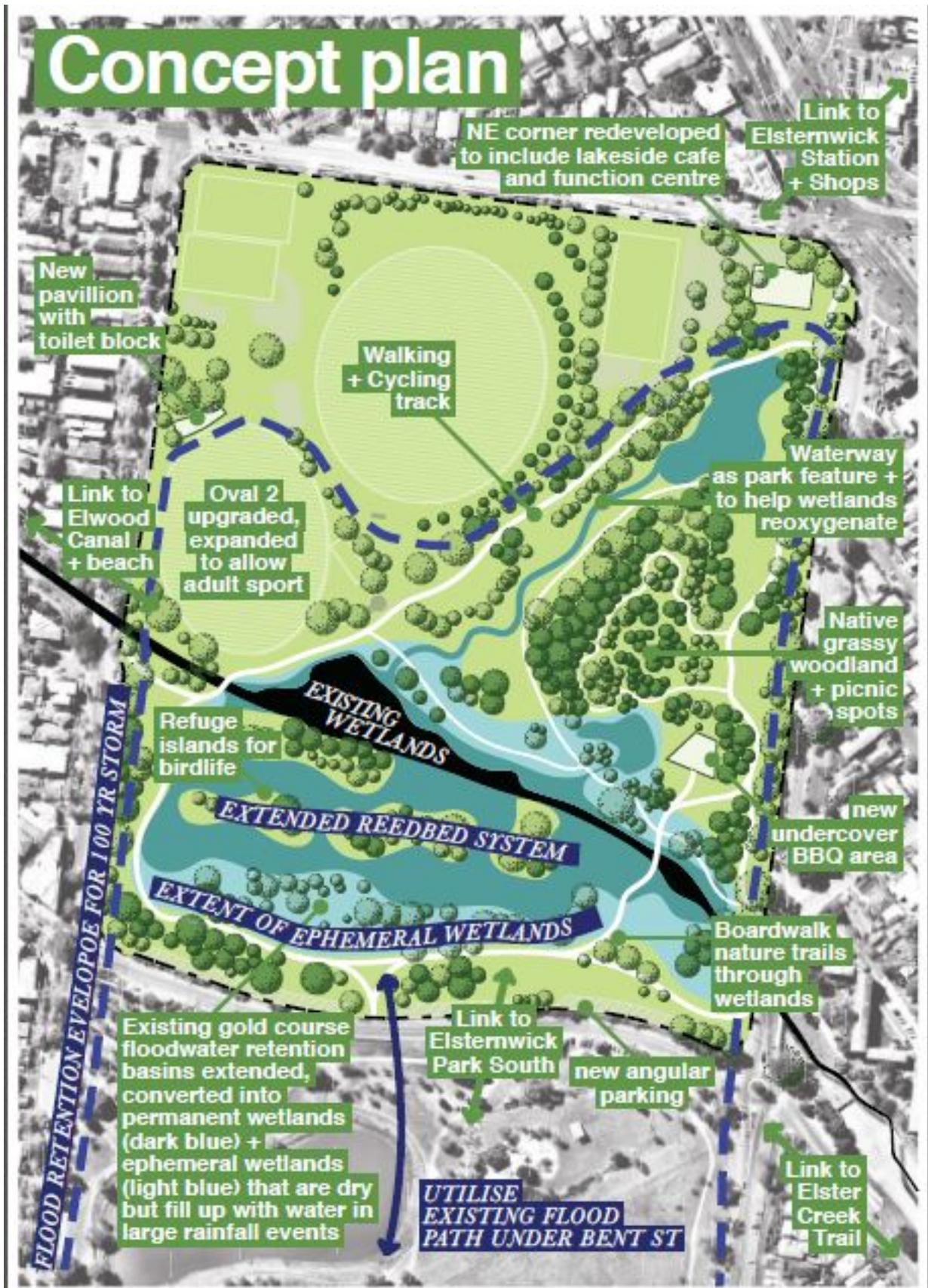
The wetlands will link with Elster Creek both up and downstream, an integral part of a connected haven for people, plants and wildlife.

The entire park will act as a storm water retention basin in times of flood and a natural biological filter to enhance water quality as it makes it way down to the bay.

Some of the wetlands will be ephemeral, wet some of the time and dry in others. Frogs will return and kids can once again know the joy of frog calls in the evening and catching taddies. A small lake will bring life to the north east corner, connected to the lower lying wetlands via a stream with little water falls. A classic Australian windmill will assist in pumping water up to the lake.

The plants will be local, indigenous plants, well-chosen and maintained for their beauty and habitat values. These plants will include grand trees such river red-gums, grown from the seeds of the Separation Tree. These magnificent trees will be grown in a grassy woodland, park land setting with native grasslands and wild-flower areas. There will also be flowering shrubs to attract small native birds back to the area.

Park Conceptual Drawing



## Appendix 3

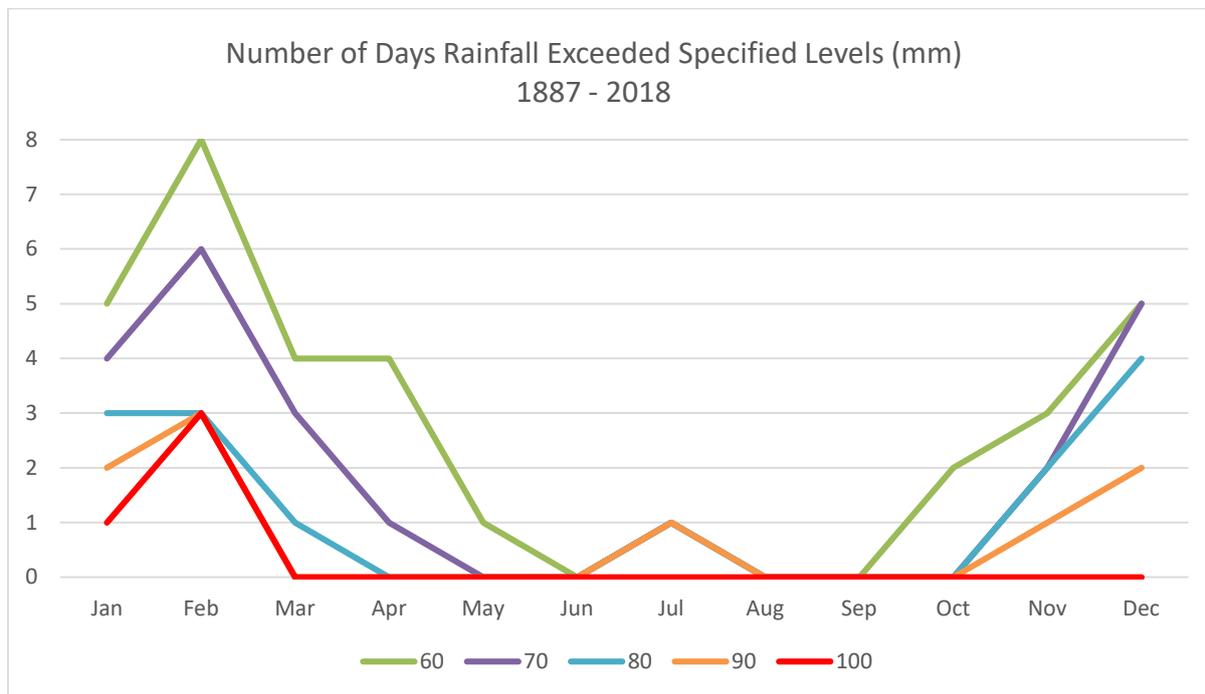
### *Elsternwick Park Coalition*

The Elsternwick Park Coalition represents a broad cross section of the community. The Coalition Committee was elected to represent the various views of interested groups and individuals, these include:

- Resident groups, especially residents of the “Huntley Street Triangle” just to the east of the park.
- People who have had their houses flooded and are hoping that someone cares enough to do something to help them out.
- People who care about parks, who want a place to picnic, walk their dogs or just to relax and read a book.
- People who care about the environment-about plants and trees and bats and birds, who love the beauty of them and dream of a little bit of bushland in the city.
- ▶
- ▶
- Groups represented in the Elsternwick Park Coalition include:
  - Huntley Street Triangle resident’s group
  - Friends of Elster Creek
  - Elwood Flood Action Group (eFlag)
  - Port Phillip EcoCentre
  - Port Phillip Bicycle Users group
  - Bayside Climate Change Action Group,
  - Beaumaris Conservation Society,
  - Sandringham Foreshore Association,
  - Marine Care Ricketts Point
  - Brighton Residents for Urban Protection
  - Glen Eira Environment Group
  - Locals Into Victoria’s Environment (LIVE)
  - Love Our Streets
  - Port Phillip Alliance for Sustainability.

## Appendix 4

### Rainfall Events



Based on historical rainfall data from the Bureau of Meteorology

## Appendix 5

### References

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