



Appendix 4d

16.3 Draft Policy - CP054 Victoria Park

Victoria Park QCA submission

Ordinary Meeting of Council

Wednesday 24 August 2022 at 7:00pm

Queenscliff Town Hall

Queenscliffe Community Association Inc.

Reg. No A00 323 OIV

PO Box 19, Queenscliff 3225



Queenscliffe
Community Association Inc.

VICTORIA PARK CCP054

Dear Mayor and Councillors

QCA Comment and Submission



Hatchet job: Anger as ancient Queenscliff trees chopped

This submission should reflect the weighting of the QCA membership.

The key issue over the current state of Victoria Park rests solely with Council and Administration.

Key Issue- Can it be determined if this was not a WorkSafe decision as WorkSafe declared the site was not one presenting an immediate OHS risk, what has Council done to properly investigate, inform itself and undertake due diligence on ALL the steps undertaken after the issue of the PIN?

Council resolved Officers present a plan for Victoria Park in March. Council needs to have full confidence the entire Council motion was presented to WorkSafe. This remains unclear. Council needs to have complete answers to why management/CEO had the capacity to have 'high level' discussion with relevant State Authorities before any actions were undertaken on Victoria Park and that these did not occur. A complete explanation is required. Council should undertake a full enquiry on the process and be fully present at any meetings with WorkSafe and DELWP on this issue.

Unless these key issues and concerns are resolved to Council and Community expectations any further actions on Victoria Park remain clouded and subject to issues of trust and confidence in the future management of Victoria Park. Full reporting from any further discussions with State Authorities need to be publicly aired.

Many QCA members live near this important Public Park that at various stages was regarded as one of the most important environmental Borough assets and Botanic features of Queenscliff. The forefathers who left this land as a Public treed space was recognised by the early planners c 1854 onwards. Many individual submissions are also responding to the special place Victoria Park has been to the history of Queenscliff. Diana Sawyer QHM has written a book on its undulating and neglectful history while VHD attributed a lack of integrity to past poor and inadequate management, preservation, conservation and restoration. Many towns of our vintage have Botanic Gardens and Public Parks. Not many possessed a natural Coastal Moonah Woodland pre-dating White settlement. Few had the influence and impact of 3 notable curators-Bunce, Von Mueller and Gilfoyle in their planting and seed provisions to supplement the unusual features of Victoria Park. These features should have been celebrated and enhanced.

Victoria Park was named or given its reference soon after WW1 in the 1920's. It is possible naming reflected the 75th anniversary of the naming of Victoria rather than reference to the past Monarch although that could be another possibility.

Victoria Park should have been a cornerstone of good environmental practice. The QCA have made tentative steps of possible Gordon TAFE involvement in seed and planting custodianship and input. Council should pursue this possible relationship as positive regeneration of the Park.

Victoria Park in the 1980s was recognised as the core of the Botanic Garden Precinct and afforded specific Planning and heritage protections.

A biodiversity map of this park should have been completed. One may exist in Council resources or DELWP offices. Ideally this should be on public record.

The Policy now in its preliminary form and requiring some major revisions and additions lacks a Vision Statement. It requires a comprehensive Replanting and Vegetation Plan to accompany it.

The QCA suggests Council take on board the various powerful and informative suggestions of individuals and Community groups who have vainly attempted to protect and value the environmental and passive recreational qualities of Victoria Park.

Councillors should seek ALL information pertaining to the Victoria Park saga. Instead of reliance on limited legal opinion, Councillors should be fully informed of all actions and non- actions taken, all correspondences with Arborists/ WorkSafe and DELWP etc. This should inform Councillors.

Currently the Tourist Park Camping Map is unchanged showing retention of all sites. All plans need to be co-ordinated so there is no capacity for errors, misconceptions or blurred lines.

The current aerial photo needs to present the current de foliated remains.

There is no Coastal Management Plan to guide the Policy. Until the CMP is in place and implemented related policy documents should not be emanating from a Coastal Planning vacuum.

The QCA remain concerned about any dual use function of Victoria. There is no appropriate CMP in place and should be at this point a single use park to restore its canopy and vegetation. An adequate replanting scheme needs to be provided for and requests to State Government grant funding should be applied for to enable restoration under a qualified landscape plan.

The QCA concerns relate around lack of adequate vegetation protections as already evident on the Park management system over many decades. This was particularly apparent and evident over the recent desecration of the Park under various authorities actions, non-interventions and non-consultative decisions. Such decisions have left permanent marks on Victoria Park and on its caring environmental community.

The lack of adherence to Planning and Heritage policies and controls have been evident in approaches to Victoria Park management policies.

The Policy should recognise that the Park, first established in 1868, is a permanent Public Park and central feature of Queenscliff's Botanic Gardens Precinct – Heritage Precinct HO 9 (refer BoQ Planning Scheme and original Queenscliffe Urban Conservation Study page 255) which contains many restored heritage buildings along adjoining King and Mercer Streets.

The Mercer and King Street frontages now resemble poor integration with streetscape and is contrary to Planning policies. View lines now to Monahan Centre/Ground lights/Scoreboard etc have diminished the traditional Green wedge effect and buffer effect Victoria Park provided.

There is no permit system process and engagement processes with vegetation management or removals. The policy should reflect tighter and enforceable controls and detail a permit process.

No valuation system placed on Park assets. Net returns on Park outweighed significantly by asset value. ROI is poor. Lack of a Financial Management Plan for this Policy segmenting income by site type, seasonal occupancy etc against total direct and indirect costs incurred including full contribution of salary and overhead of BOQ staff and management would reveal possibly very low returns based on asset value.

No business case presented for camping and caravanning. Little evidence of costs & revenue per site. The Policy would need to be fully detailed to arrive at an expected financial profit or loss for this cost centre to determine actual performance.

No formal approvals for camping been provided or evident from DELWP over many years. Council appears to have found Council records for 1997 decisions but fail to find approvals and other documents.

The impact of possible future Work Safe notices (or particularly how interpreted by management) severely impacting on tree retention and shape is of major concern. Nothing in the policy protects the Park from future Work Safe notices (management interpretations) and future removals. This needs to be clarified. The recent letter written from Council to State Authorities needs to be made public. Questions arise why such letters and meetings are undertaken after the event and not prior.

A lack of conservation and preservation ethos shown at management level to retain integrity of Park and Botanic qualities.

With risk factors based predominantly on camp usage this has detrimentally affected the retention of native and exotic species. A re-analysis of Risk assessments needs to be undertaken.

Independence and second opinions from Arborists on any major works need to be undertaken. Dr Greg Moore recently highlighted need for an independent State Arborist to make assessments. This recent action had State- wide implications.

There appears a lack of credible Committee of Management structure, Minutes and decision making. Are these DEWLP complaint? What records are sent to DELWP?

There appears a lack of a nominated Risk Committee, Minutes and decision- making processes. The Audit and Risk Committee appear to be non- existent in this space. This should be a legislated process and risk evaluation process. This requires serious investigation under the Act.

The lack of DELWP involvement in protection of vegetation under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act and Coastal Reserves Native Vegetation Guidelines. This requires serious investigation under the Act.

The non- compliance with DELWP Camping Access Policies and legislation. Lack of adherence challenges community confidence in managing Tourist Park bookings and future uses of the Park. Present map on BOQ booking site unchanged (until Council notified). This requires serious investigation under the Policy framework. It is now apparent from CEO response Council website information was uploaded or implemented up 3-4 months ago indicating possible predetermination of Council actions and plans or possibly an action plan not sanctioned by Council. Again, clarity from Councillors on this question needs resolution and explanation. The QCA would welcome further comment on such uploading of web information.

Poor policy settings have been evident historically and again impact on community confidence.

Lack of an asset plan and priority works program again affects and impacts community confidence. Compliance dates have not been met.

Decision making solely at discretion of CEO as shown in the WorkSafe PIN process does not engender confidence that the Parks natural assets are at the forefront of Council decision making. Proper Council investigation and review of the process is required.

The Botanic qualities of Victoria Park have been undermined as noted by Heritage Victoria and there is little evidence under the policy of the restoration of such historic and heritage qualities.

Little evidence exists of appropriate Council management of biodiversity, habitat and birdlife protections.

Without a significant tree register and consistent tree numbering and management system in place there is a lack of adequate recording and proper systems mechanisms to enable an ongoing confidence in the management system. Painting trees with numbers is reflective of inadequate management systems. Past recording systems have renumbered trees and not afforded consistent documentation of works. How is to be rectified? Section 26 of WorkSafe Pin highlights deficiencies in Council OHS responses.

WorkSafe under S 26 identified flaws in the application of exclusion zones and adequate signage as per Council Motion. This possibly created the loss of possibly many more trees than required. This lack of appropriate registration system impacts on community confidence. Again, the Policy should strengthen protections for existing trees with adequate use of exclusion zones and other remedial measures to safeguard trees.

The two- week limited engagement process does not engender community confidence in developing sound policy frameworks. This policy development requires more time.

Lack of reference documents limits the Policy credentials and integrity.

Lack of input and expertise from DELWP inhibits good policy development.

A properly trained Coastal and Environmental Manager attached to the Planning Department should be utilised and funded via re organisation of staff roles so no budgetary staffing implications. Expertise from DELWP offered to Council should be utilised.

The QCA would be willing to undertake further discussion and consultation with Mayor and Councillors on better approaches to Victoria Park protections and enhancement measures.

Some suggested points/revisions/ additional comments are highlighted in RED

CONTEXT

Part of the subject land is reserved under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 as a Public Park. This Policy is subject to the Implementation of the Coastal Management Plan.

Victoria Park is located on land in the township of Queenscliff. Victoria Park was reserved for Public Gardens and Recreation purposes on 20 January 1868. Camping in Victoria Park commenced in 1937. **(it should be noted camping as distinct from caravanning) The latter has had severe impacts on the quality, impacts and presentation of the Park. It should note reference to being a Botanical Garden.**

In December 1997 Council resolved to restrict camping in Victoria Park to the period between 1 December and 30 April each year. For the rest of the year Victoria Park functions as a public park.

Comment - A DNRE letter of 19 April 1999 specifically excluded caravan and camping usage. This was reiterated by Mr. Burn at the VCAT Directions hearing. It is understood DNRE/DSE had given no permission for camping. No authority exists and questionable whether COM has such decision.

A storm event on 29 October 2021 caused significant damage to vegetation within Victoria Park requiring the removal and lopping of many trees. (This is presently disputed as risk assessments solely based on dual usage and did not investigate in June 2022 uses of exclusion zones now proposed) In response, Council committed to revegetating and restoring Victoria Park. This policy supports this commitment by setting out a framework for managing Victoria Park for future use.

(There is no mention of the standard 2 for 1 replacement system as per policy. This should be in the general area of removed trees and same species)

PURPOSE

(This Purpose has now been diminished catastrophically by the removal and reduction of Moonah (Melaleuca lanceolata) and other tree species that were specifically protected

The Wording of bettering is unclear / needs better and appropriate wording

The QCA oppose use for caravanning and camping. The Park needs to be restored and repaired.

It is unclear what sustainability is referred to Financial / Environmental? If environmental extreme and irreparable has been inflicted.

This policy sets out the principles Council will use to manage Victoria Park to protect the environmental values and enhance the amenity of Victoria Park for all users. These principles seek to both:

1. (a) deliver on Council's commitment to improving the management of Council-operated tourist parks for the benefit of the whole community, specifically, by bettering?? dual use areas for community and visitors alike; and
2. (b) uphold Council's core value of sustainability and its commitment to delivering environmental regeneration actions under the Climate Emergency Response Plan.

Comment- Little evidence such a core value exists and used in the management of the severe Moonah and exotic cutbacks. Little evidence of support for birds and habitat

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

- **Vegetation Reserves:** areas within Victoria Park permanently reserved for vegetation
- **Restricted Camping:** areas with Victoria Park that will be opened for low impact (meaning?) camping for limited periods within the annual period Victoria Park is open for camping
- **General Camping:** all other areas within Victoria Park that are not vegetation reserves or restricted camping areas

These areas are identified in the Victoria Park Plan 2022 (CP054 Appendix 1)

The QCA does not accept camping to be allowed and that areas such as Little Toorak become off limits to camping and permanent vans consistent with legislation and access policies

POLICY

It is policy that the following principles underpin the ongoing management and future use of the park: Park Management

1. Victoria Park will remain dual use, a public park and place for campers with distinct areas for vegetation and camping (**disagree with dual use as described**)
2. Camping will be permitted in the General Camping areas from 1 December 1 to 30 April, and the Queenscliff Music Festival weekend. (**disagree**)
3. Low impact camping will be allowed in Restricted Camping areas:
 - i. During the Queenscliffe Music Festival (**disagree**)
 - ii. For five weeks from 26 December until 31 January
 - iii. With a caravan or recreational vehicle with a maximum open length of 6.5 metres
4. Camping in Restricted Camping areas may be subject to further restrictions if a qualified arborist assesses that camping is having a detrimental impact on vegetation growth, canopy enhancement and/or habitat regeneration (**note Arborist did specify that in the Jan 2020 Report and earlier reports**)
5. No camping will be permitted in Vegetation Reserves (**How policed and enforced?**)
6. There will be no public access to Vegetation Reserves (**How policed and enforced?**)

Environmental Management (**Ideally there should. Be a fundamental Council Vision Statement and Vegetation and Replanting Plan**)

1. Council will revegetate **whole of Victoria Park and that will become the sole priority and be an ongoing project**
2. Revegetation will include an appropriate mix of indigenous and exotic plants recognising and extending Victoria Park's ecological history.
3. There will be a strong focus on increasing tree canopy, maintaining biodiversity and increasing habitats at the site over the long-term.
4. The relevant elements of the Climate Emergency Response Plan and the Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan will be applied in the long-term environmental management of the park.
5. Council will look to partner with the community when planning and undertaking revegetation, vegetation management and environmental preservation at the park.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This policy will be reviewed on a continuous basis, but as a minimum every **two (one)** years from the date of adoption.

OTHER REFERENCES

Borough of Queenscliffe Climate Emergency Response Plan

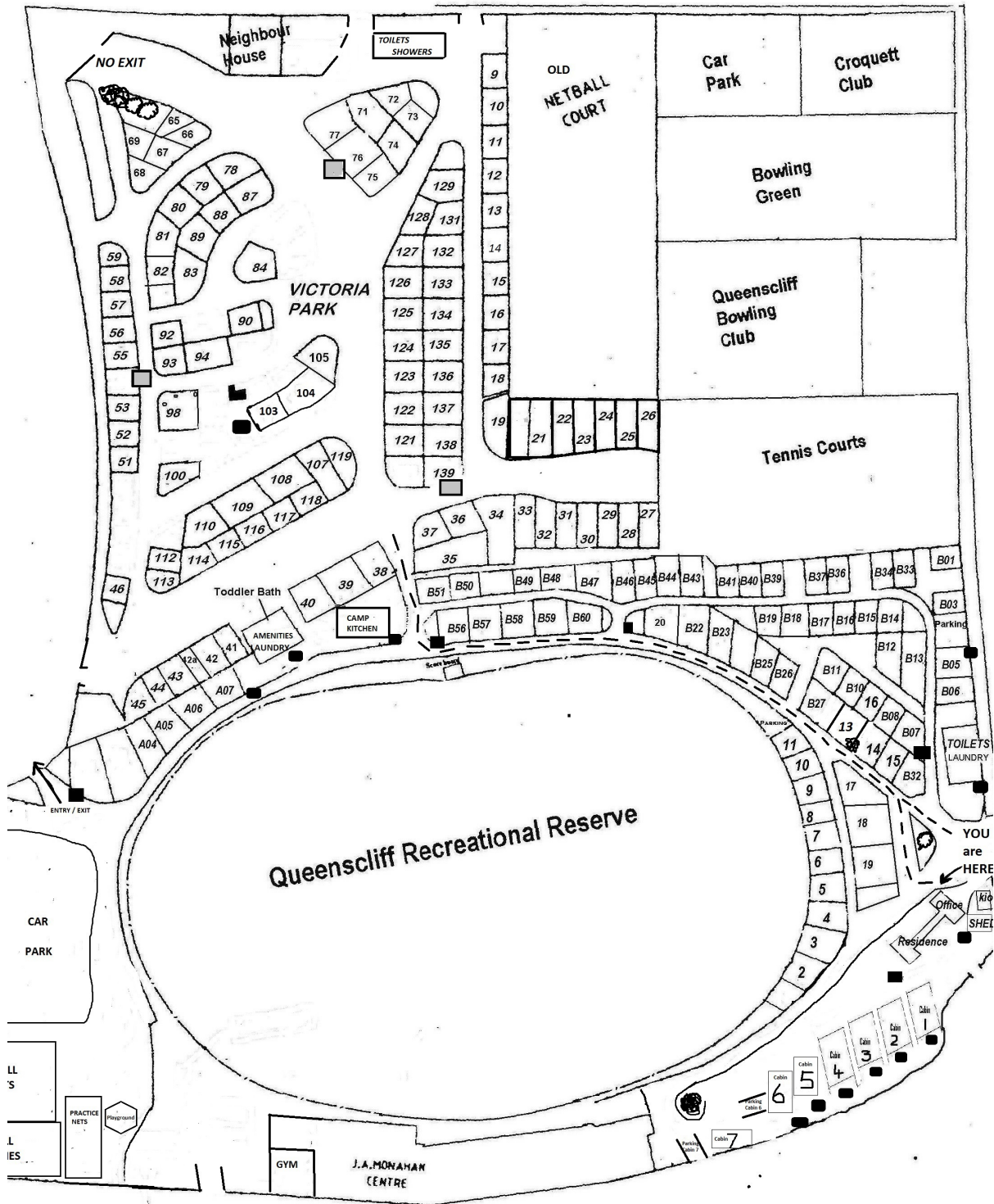
Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan

Comment Where are other references Coastal Management Plans/. Crown Land Reserves Act

Council Vandalism Policy DELWP Native Vegetation Policies etc

END

Current Camping Map still online



Yours Sincerely
 QCA President and Executive
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