

## **Editorial : Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) under threat again:**

The council elections are over and now it appears that the fight over the VPO retention is about to resume. Although candidate statements did not indicate that the VPO was an election issue, we have been informed that a vote on the VPO will be part of the agenda for the Nov 27th council meeting. Monash council voted to retain the VPO a mere 14 months ago, but the margin was a narrow one. Readers of the Leader will have noted a campaign to stir up public opinion over the perceived unjust provisions of the VPO and with several new councillors in place a vote could overturn previous decision. You can find the relevant Leader article with the following link.

<http://waverley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/law-on-trees-faces-the-axe/>

The Committee of the Friends of Damper Creek Reserve have been in contact with the Leader and have been requested to provide a response to a number of questions. The responses on behalf of the members are as follows:

**1. The position of the FODCR has not changed since the Monash City Council vote last September. We are adamantly opposed to Cr Lake's second attempt to repeal the VPO.**

**2. The purpose of the VPO has not changed: The VPO is vital to maintain the treed character of the City of Monash. The VPO was set up to prevent moonscaping of blocks by development.**

***Trees extend the ecosystem of the city parks and street trees and provide significant public health benefits.***

***3. Undoubtedly Cr Lake is attempting to railroad the new councillors before they are fully briefed on this issue. The new councillors need to fully conversant with the benefits provided by the VPO before they can vote from a position of knowledge. The loss of the VPO would be a serious loss to the residents of Monash and the amenity of the suburb for present and future generation.***

***3. The VPO already provides for dead, dying and dangerous trees to be removed under guidance of qualified arborists, utilising an established council service.***

***4. We believe that if the council is appropriately informed, the benefits will be self-evident and the VPO will be retained.***

However, the answers above do not give the complete story as there are a great number of misconceptions and distortions in the arguments presented by those opposed to the VPO. Many of those objecting to the VPO are complaining about the management of street trees and trees in reserves, these are not covered by the VPO and are a separate issue. The council does have a process in place to assess trees where removal has been requested. Research has shown that permission to remove trees is seldom refused. The much quoted survey stating that 85% of residents want the VPO removed has serious flaws, being subject to manipulation and misinterpretation. Apart from the possibility of

voting multiple times, the survey asked respondents to specify if they wanted a change. When the statistics were released it appears that all respondents wanting a change were assumed to be calling for elimination of the VPO.

However deeply we delve into the flaws in this survey (and the public campaigns that preceded it) the facts remain that Monash remains 25<sup>th</sup> out of 29 councils for the provision of public open space (including sporting grounds) and the environment is heavily dependent on trees in private gardens to extend the ecosystem provided by our reserves which are limited in both number and area. Removal of trees from private properties in VPO areas indirectly degrades the value of reserves and it is proper that the council exercise control.

The committee of the FODCR realise that there are a variety of opinions among members but we urge members to express their opinions.

1/ Please attend the council meeting on November 27<sup>th</sup> to demonstrate your support for the VPO.

2/ Contact your councillors to express your concerns, in particular the new councillors, a list of councillors can be found on the FODCR website or on the Monash website [www.monash.vic.gov.au](http://www.monash.vic.gov.au).

3/ Write to the papers (any or all of them, but particularly the Leader or Waverley Gazette).

## **Pets and Parks**

The preservation of Damper Creek Reserve is inextricably linked to people and their pet dogs. The health of older residents is often dependent on the psychological support provided by pets and yet, mobility issues often

make it difficult to bring pets to places such as Damper Creek to provide adequate exercise. Enter MPETS, a volunteer organisation which assists with basic care of pets such as walking, washing, cleaning and pet health care. MPETS is a MonashLink community health service. To use MPETS or register as a volunteer call 1300 552 509 or email [vsayce@monashlink.org.au](mailto:vsayce@monashlink.org.au).

### Good News

The Western plains were the first lands taken up for broadacre farming in Victoria. The biodiversity of these areas is surprisingly high in spite of a century and a half of farming. The state Government is in the process of buying 15000 hectares of cropping and grazing land near Melton and Laverton to restore it for endangered plants and animals. The grasslands are home to many endangered species such as the Golden Sun Moth, the Striped Legless Lizard, the Growling Grass Frog and the Grassland Earless Dragon as well as many grasses, lilies, mosses and other plants. Their preservation is to be applauded.

### Newborn Tawny Frogmouth

Noted near the Ryland's kitchen window, a Tawny Frogmouth chick. Keep an eye on the tree with the horizontal branch near the Alice St entrance to the reserve. Chicks have been seen on the same branch in previous years and it is pleasing to see that this is an established breeding spot.

### Annual BBQ

Don't forget to reserve Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> for our annual BBQ. This year we will be holding it at the end of Richard Rd as the Alice St area revegetation is making this area impractical.

### Important dates to remember:

	November	Notes
<b>Meeting:</b>	Wed29th - 7:30pm	Alvie Hall
<b>Christmas BBQ</b>	Sun Dec 2nd 12-00 noon to 3pm	Richard Road
	<b>01/02/13</b>	
<b>Meeting:</b>	Wed 27th- 7:30 pm	Alvie Hall
<b>Working Bee</b>	Sun Mar 3rd 10-00am to 12-30 pm	TBA

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**Damper Creek Bushland Reserve: part of the Yarra Catchment.**

Please address all mail to:

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### The Newsletter of

**FRIENDS OF  
DAMPER CREEK RESERVE INC.**

Reg No. A0029531G

[www.vicnet.net.au/~damper](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~damper)

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# DAMPER CREEK DOINGS

**November 2012**

