



## **Newport Lakes Open Space Development and Conservation Plan Friends of Newport Lakes Consultation Report**

This report has been completed after Friends of Newport Lakes Inc met with the City of Hobsons Bay representatives, at their invitation, to discuss plans for Pavey Park and Newport Lakes conservation reserve. We have collated a number of key points that we believe are of major importance to the future development of the precinct and hope that in doing so we help inform the design process that the Open Space Planner, Open Space and City Design department is currently undertaking for the park.

### **Water Availability and Quality**

The long term sustainability of the Newport Lakes depends on the availability and the quality of the water used to fill them. Climate condition changes have seen rainfall decrease in the area which results in insufficient natural water runoff to feed the Lakes. This necessitates more frequent use of saline bore water which adversely affects the water quality of the Lakes and their ecosystems. There is the opportunity for this project to meaningfully address this major issue, particularly as the Lakes are central to the precinct's charm and are a draw card for visitors. We propose that the following measures are considered:

1. Improve fresh water availability to the Lakes by redirecting the carpark water to the pond above the waterfall.
2. Collecting and directing water runoff from Graham Street towards the Lakes via new water swales across the park between the off leash dog part and Pavey Park.
3. Explore other water supply opportunities. A report commissioned by Council and completed by Connell Wagner Engineers in 2008 proposed tapping into the stormwater drainage at Gordon and Mason Streets to supply water to the lakes. Considering the enormous residential developments occurring everywhere in the municipality and the potential to collect water from ever increasing impervious surfaces that come with such developments, this report should be re-visited and opportunities re-explored.

### **Vegetation**

New planting in and around the Lakes should be included in the masterplan with the goal of improving the sustainability and biodiversity of the area and as a way to help achieve Council's Urban Forest Strategy targets. We see a number of planting opportunities as follows:

1. Re-planting around the edges of the existing carpark pond, after reducing the water level by the redirection mentioned above
2. Planting within the conservation area to improve biodiversity amongst the ground and middle story of the park, taking into account the HBCC Vegetation plan for the NLP.
3. Planting on the edges of the park, particularly along and outside the Johnston Street fence line. E.G. NATIVE PLANT GARDEN
4. Increase tree planting where possible in Pavey Park and the off-leash dog area.



Existing planting, particularly mature trees, should be protected and maintained regardless of the tree or trees origins. There are many non-indigenous tree species in the park already so it would not be logical to single-out any particular variety of tree for removal particularly when the lack of rain caused by climate changes makes it difficult to grow trees into maturity. Any proposal to remove a mature tree must have an ecological validity.

### **Access**

We understand that as part of the Pavey Park improvements, its connection to the conservation area as an added attraction is seen as important and that the masterplan is wanting the address the existing connection/access points. Following our meeting, we would like to make the following comments:

1. Any 'formalisation' of the secondary entries should be kept to a minimum and should avoid the unnecessary removal of vegetation. We understand that some re-grading of the path may be necessary but we do not support the use of paving materials. The secondary entry points should not take on the 'main entry' role.
2. Maintenance of vehicle access needs to be maintained for operational and safety reasons. Ranger duties including the FONL conservation activities rely on the rangers' vehicles being able to get plants, mulch, tools and water to the areas where work is carried out. Where existing vehicle access conflicts with proposed pedestrian access improvements, a design solution that satisfactorily achieves both needs to be found.
3. Bike riders are a problem within the conservation area. We would like to propose the installation of signage that defines the asphalted driveway on the west of the conservation area as the designated bike path. Bike racks can also be installed to encourage riders who want to visit the conservation area to demount and go on foot.

### **Infrastructure**

There are a number of infrastructure improvements that can be done within the conservation area. There were discussions regarding removing and/or rebuilding the lookouts and the bird hide. Our view is that if these structures are not deemed unsafe they should be kept as they are as funds are better spent in other areas requiring attention. Rebuilding/renovating of any of the look-outs should be consistent with the rural feel of the area so selection of new materials will be important to us. Other than the lookout possible re-building, we would like to see improvements on the following:

1. Loose gravel paths that are a slip hazard and pathway drainage design to prevent erosion
2. Existing fencing to be maintained and pedestrian gates to be made self-closing.
3. 'Goat-trail' barricading to be implemented in some key areas to discourage bike riders and boulder climbers from using the area destructively.

### **Signage**

We believe signage should be improved but mainly around the perimeter of the conservation area. Any proposed signage within the conservation area should be kept to a minimum, be subtle and have the rural-rustic appearance that maintains the bush feel of the Lakes. We believe the



conservation area can benefit from perimeter signage that clearly alerts visitor that they are entering the conservation area and of their responsibilities within. The areas that the masterplan needs to address to this effect are:

1. The pedestrian entries on the fence line.
2. The main and secondary entries along the west edge of the conservation area.

A soft 'edge' such as timber bollards along the west of the conservation area could also be considered to help visitors identify where the area begins.

### **Future Proofing**

The sustainability of the Lakes existence into the future is under constant threat. The use of bore water does not allow for the creation of a healthy water ecosystem and there are always constant problems with the pump. Although we believe that there is a community preference to maintain the Lakes as they are, we would like the masterplan to consider some future-proofing measures. In the first instance, alternative stormwater supply needs to be explored. This is discussed earlier under Water Supply and Quality and would help maintain the Lakes but also improve the water quality and their ecosystems. However, if this is not feasible, the ephemeral wetlands proposal should be considered and its feasibility explored in the masterplan so there is a strategy in place should this action be needed. We again bring your attention to the Newport Lakes Water Quality report commissioned by HBCC and completed by Connell Wagner in July 2008. It was recommended for one lake to be made into an ephemeral wetland.