

# MERRI CREEK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE INC.

Minutes of Committee of Management Meeting No. 99, Thursday 15 May 2003, 6.30pm

Mayor's Room Brunswick Town Hall, Cnr Sydney Rd & Dawson St Brunswick. Chair: T. Hausler

## PRESENT:

City of Darebin:	Allan Wicks
City of Hume:	Cr Drew Jessop, Matt Ruchel
Moreland	Eamonn Fennessy, Cr Fraser Brindley ( <i>after item 5.1</i> )
City of Yarra:	Cr Gurm Sekhon
Shire of Mitchell:	Cr Robert Gordon
Friends of Merri Creek:	Trevor Hausler ( <i>Chair</i> ), Max Sargent, Paul Prentice, Harold Mackrell, Julie Mason
MCMC Staff:	Luisa Macmillan, Judy Bush, Ray Radford ( <i>Minutes</i> )

## 1 APOLOGIES

Cr Vince Fontana - City of Darebin; Cr Stevan Kozmevski, David Turnbull - City of Whittlesea; Silvana Predebon - City of Yarra; Ann McGregor, Alan Brennan, Allie Dawe, - Friends of Merri Creek, Simon Fell - MCMC staff.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES - MCMC MEETING No. 98 –20/2/03

**Moved** "that the Minutes for meeting on 20/2/03 be confirmed without change." H. Mackrell / R. Gordon - **Carried**

## 3 SPECIAL ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

No Special Items were proposed for discussion.

## 4 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

### 4.1 External Review of MCMC

Luisa Macmillan reported that she had received a draft discussion paper on the review of MCMC from the consultants, URCOT. A few small matters of terminology need to be straightened out before it goes before the steering committee in a few weeks time.

**ACTION:** Manager to make amendments to the review discussion paper and call a meeting of the Review Steering Committee.

### 4.2 Review of Development Guidelines

Luisa reported that she had attended a successful meeting with Lester Townsend and planners from MCMC's member councils on 1/4/03, which raised important suggestions, especially the possibility of incorporating the Guidelines into local planning policy. Lester has been away recently and, when he returns in mid May, he will consider these suggestions.

### 4.3 MCMC AGM Draft Minutes and Annual Report

Draft Minutes for the Annual General Meeting on 5/12/02 were sent with the Agenda papers for the meeting on 20/2/03. Although these Minutes don't need to be approved until the 2003 AGM in December, this is a long way off, so members were asked to read the Minutes and contact Ray Radford with any corrections or additions.

The 2001-2002 Annual Report has now been printed and copies were enclosed with the Agenda papers. The Chair thanked all staff involved with the preparation of the report, particularly Ray Radford for his coordination role. (*The Annual Report and the Auditor's Report are also available on the MCMC website: [www.mcmc.org.au](http://www.mcmc.org.au)*)

### 4.4 Decrease in Parks Victoria Funding

Luisa circulated a letter from Richard O'Byrne of Parks Victoria (PV) which stated that the previous Agency Grants program funds have been redirected to the Metropolitan Trail Network over the next four years. Luisa reminded the meeting that information had been presented to the August 2002 meeting showing that the PV grants program was in decline; the program is now non-existent. Over the years, MCMC has received substantial grants from PV and these have enabled lots of work to be done on the Creek. The PV letter mentions volunteer group grants still being available, but these grants only pay for materials, not labour. It is unlikely that PV will have the available resources to ensure the same level of restoration works for the grasslands of State significance, that MCMC has been restoring with PV Agency Grants funding.

The loss of these grants will have a substantial impact on MCMC, particularly the Parkland Management Team and there will also be a significant loss to Councils. Judy Bush said that MCMC will have to find ways to use the Council funding to run community activities that were previously largely funded by PV Agency Grants and to find other sources of funding, including Envirofund.

Matt Ruchel said that it might be worth trying Catchment Management Authorities as a source of funding.

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Max Sargent suggested that MCMC pursue the issue with interested Councils, the MAV and the VLGA to try and reinstate the grants. Cr Drew Jessop said that we should first see where PV funds are going now. Allan Wicks responded that the funds are going towards bike paths to fulfil an election promise and he suggested that councils' capex budgets may be able to supply MCMC with some materials for project works. Max suggested that MCMC develop a fund-raising strategy and Allan suggested approaching Rotary with a scheme.

**ACTION:** Manager is to ensure that the issue of fund-raising is discussed at the next meeting of the Executive Sub-Committee with the aim of preparing an action plan for consideration at the full Committee meeting on 21/8/03.

Max asked what would now happen with maintenance of existing plantings and Judy Bush responded that these were not funded by PV grants, except for the grasslands, which were now a matter for PV.

**Moved** "that MCMC seek assurance from the Minister that maintenance of State and National grassland sites will be undertaken in the context of the strategic direction that the Government proposed before the last election; and that a copy of the letter is sent to Parks Victoria." D. Jessop / M. Sargent - **Carried**.

**ACTION:** Manager to write to the Minister as above and send a copy to Parks Victoria.

#### **4.5 MCMC Submission to Melbourne 2030**

It was reported at the Planning & Issues Sub-Committee on 10/4/03 that MCMC had made its submission to Melbourne 2030 and that this submission had been emailed to all Committee members. Hard copies of the submission were available at the Planning & Issues meeting. Please ring Ray Radford if you would like a hard copy.

#### **4.6 Visit to Mitchell Shire**

Luisa reported that she and Judy visited Mitchell on 13/5/03 and they were given a good strategic overview of the southern part of the shire and its planning issues, especially the effect of the 2030 growth boundary. They learnt that most people in Wallan commute to Melbourne to work, that the waterways are outside Melbourne Water's boundary and it is unclear which authority is responsible for waterway management, with the CMA having no statutory power over the waterway act at this stage. (This situation also occurs in parts of Hume.) Luisa and Judy had a pleasant walk at a public reserve along Wallan Creek (in Wallan), a tributary to the Merri. Luisa said that the visit resulted in a good exchange of information. She anticipates MCMC offering technical advice on revegetation to Mitchell and the opening up of opportunities for cooperation between Mitchell residents and the Friends of Merri Creek.

## **5 STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **5.1 Executive Sub-committee**

*(The Minutes for 3/3/03 were enclosed with the Agenda and the Minutes for 15/4/03 were circulated at the meeting.)*

Trevor Hausler highlighted the following items from the Minutes of 15/4/03:

Item 4.1 Expense Account/Paid lunches etc: The Executive discussed Fringe Benefit Tax implications. It was suggested, at this meeting, that this could be looked at in the context of the fund-raising program (*see Action above under 4.4*). Cr Drew Jessop said that Hume's corporate funding tends to come through networking, talks and the establishment of personal relationships, rather than through wining and dining.

Item 4.3 Manager's review: Luisa has been at MCMC for a year now and her review is due. Luisa asked for feedback from members about her work and said that she would send out a small stakeholder questionnaire.

Item 4.9 Waterwatch Estuarine Monitoring Kit: MCMC approached Melbourne City Council to purchase the estuarine monitoring kit for Waterwatch activities within the City of Melbourne, and they approved purchase of the kit. Melbourne City Council wants to do a media event about the Waterwatch activity.

### **5.2 Finance Sub-committee**

*(The Minutes for 9/5/03 were circulated at the meeting, along with a Treasurer's report from Allie Dawe)*

As Allie Dawe was an apology, Luisa read the Treasurer's report. She highlighted item 4.8 Income for 2003-2004 (from the minutes) and noted that, as well as the demise of Parks Victoria Agency Grants Program, MCMC was not successful in its application for funds from VSAP. Together, these programs contributed about 30% of MCMC's income in 2002-03. Matt Ruchel reported that Hume Council was successful in gaining VSAP funding to undertake a project centered around three drain sub-catchments in the Campbellfield/ Barry Rd area.

Luisa also reported that, since the meeting on 9/5, MCMC had received the unexpected request to contribute to the LAS superannuation shortfall and she asked for advice from Councils re payment. Cr Robert Gordon suggested that there might be a third option of paying the interest only.

Luisa showed overheads that revealed there had been no rise in the contributions from Councils to MCMC over a number of years. All Councils, except Mitchell, have been asked to increase their contributions and she thanked Yarra for already agreeing to an increase. Drew Jessop suggested visiting member Councils and explaining what MCMC does with the funds from Councils. This suggestion was supported by Cr Gurm Sekhon.

**ACTION:** Manager to arrange a visit to each Council to explain what MCMC does with Council funds.

### **5.3 Planning and Issues Sub-Committee**

There was nothing further to add to the Minutes for 10/4/03 (*as circulated at the meeting*.)

#### **5.4 Merri Creek and Environs Strategy Implementation Sub-Committee**

*(The Minutes for 20/3/03 were sent with the Agenda).*

Ray Radford reported that, although the Minutes mentioned that the revised Action table was attached, this was actually not the case as one action was awaiting confirmation on the wording. He promised that the relevant revised Action tables would be sent out with the Agenda before the next Sub-Committee meeting on 19/6/03.

#### **5.5 Merri Creek Environment Fund Sub-Committee**

*No report as no meeting since 26/4/01.*

### **6 STAFF REPORTS**

#### **6.1 Manager's Report**

##### **6.1.1 Tour of sites with Hume Council**

Luisa reported that she had attended a tour of Merri Creek sites with Hume Council staff including a "new discovered" stretch of Council-owned land in Kalkallo, approximately 30 metres wide by 1.5 kilometres long. Although much of the site is gorse, it contains valuable remnants. The nearby Kalkallo cemetery, which carries remnant native grassland was also visited. Unfortunately, new graves are being installed in some of the highest value areas of the cemetery. There was discussion of measures that could be used to protect these remnants. Luisa is looking forward to continuing the cooperative working relationship with Hume.

##### **6.1.2 Craigieburn Bypass**

Luisa reported that VicRoads were having a problem getting the authority for the bypass to go over the railway line (just north of Craigieburn) and that this was delaying the letting of the tender for Contract 4.

##### **6.1.3 Merri Creek Park**

Luisa reported that the Merri Creek Park Working Party hasn't met since the last Committee meeting. Parks Victoria has been holding direct consultations with local Councils, MCMC and community members.

##### **6.1.4 2002 Thiess Services National Riverprize**

Luisa reported that there had been no further progress on deciding on expenditure of the money from Riverprize. The Executive will be working through the suggestions in order to make a recommendation to the Committee.

#### **6.2 Conservation Coordinator Report & Parkland Coordinator Report**

*(The Conservation Coordinator's Report and the Parkland Coordinator's Report were sent with the Agenda.)*

Judy Bush noted the following items in her report:

Item 1 Illegal grazing by cattle: Judy said that the farmer has taken the cattle back to Jerilderie and she highlighted that MCMC had organised two very successful community pick-ups of the cow pats.

Item 2 Melbourne Water willow removal: Judy reported she was still trying to obtain details from Melbourne Water regarding the proposed works and the species to be planted. A site meeting had been arranged with Melbourne Water and Moreland Council to consider the issue of layback works. Max Sargent was concerned as to how works, such as the Willow removal by Melbourne Water or the proposed tree removal by PowerNet, can be scheduled so that the Creek does not look denuded. Judy responded that we need to obtain a revised schedule of works from Melbourne Water and then PowerNet can work in with this.

**ACTION:** Conservation Coordinator is to organise a meeting with Melbourne Water, PowerNet and Moreland and Darebin Councils to coordinate the proposed Creek works

##### **6.2.1 Consideration of Draft Policy on Planting with Indigenous Species within Merri Creek Parklands**

*(The Draft Policy, on yellow paper, was enclosed with the Conservation Coordinator's Report.)*

Judy reported that she had received lots of feedback on this draft policy.

Cr Drew Jessop suggested that the introduction to the draft policy should contain something about education and broadening of knowledge. Max said that FOMC discussed this at their last meeting and their view was that the wording after "Merri catchment" in the second paragraph seemed to undermine the intent of the rest of the policy and so all the additional wording should be deleted and replaced with "where practicable." Also, some of the catchment was not actually in an urban context. This suggestion initiated some discussion, with Allan Wicks wanting to retain the general intent of the wording that Max wanted to delete.

**Moved** "that the draft policy on Planting with Indigenous Species within Merri Creek Parklands be adopted in principle with the inclusion of education and broadening of knowledge in the introduction." G. Sekhon / R. Gordon - **Carried by a majority.**

**ACTION:** Conservation Coordinator to prepare a draft revised policy, considering all the various views, for consideration at the meeting on 21/8/03.

#### **6.3 Catchment Coordinator's Report**

In the absence of Simon Fell (on paternity leave), Luisa reported on the Catchment Program's activities. Jessica Miller, MCMC's Waterwatch Officer, has been busy with visits to schools, festivals and training for community volunteers. Following on from a meeting with Moreland Council, she will be looking at methods that MCMC might use as an indicator of the health of the Creek.

Workshops for the Community Streams stormwater program, conducted by sustainability consultants, Vox Bandicoot, have commenced. De Grebner, Community streams Coordinator, is organising and recruiting for the workshops. Tony Faithfull is working towards completing the Myer funded Making Waves program by the end of June. Angela Foley has been organising the Moreland Autumn Planting Festival, which is at Moomba Park Fawkner on 31/5/03. Rotary will provide volunteers for the BBQ. The National Bank has made funds available for Waterwatch activities to be conducted at the festival.

## **7 MEMBER REPORTS**

### **Moreland City Council:**

Eamonn Fennessy reported that the Autumn Planting Festival, mentioned just previously, is coming up on 31/5/03. He has been involved in discussions with Melbourne Water about Willow removal and the possible impacts of layback programs on the shared path. Moreland is planning its first Resting Place at Roberts Reserve Brunswick, this spring and there will be further consultation about this. Council has decided not to support the proposed housing estate at Jukes Rd grasslands as there is no benefit for conservation values or open space. Context is re-drafting the Moreland Open Space Strategy and Tony Faithfull has completed a land ownership survey of open space to inform discussion with Government authorities that may be considering disposing some of their land.

### **Mitchell Shire Council:**

Cr Robert Gordon reported that Mitchell has decided to be an environmentally responsible Council and has installed a number of litter traps including in drains going to the Wallan Creek.

### **Yarra City Council:**

Cr Gurnm Sekhon reported that Yarra Council is committed to MCMC and that he made a political stand of support, which meant responding to questions as to why Yarra funds MCMC.

### **Hume City Council:**

Cr Drew Jessop reported that he had been re-appointed as Hume's representative on MCMC for another three years. He also holds the environmental portfolio. A major initiative in Hume is the urban renewal program in the Dallas/Broadmeadows area that will, in the longer term, involve major works on Merlynston Creek. The Draft Greenhouse Action Plan has been released and it includes a sustainability fund. The Hume contribution to MCMC is in the upcoming budget. Council successfully launched the Hume State of the Environment report. The community green planting program has been delayed for a month due to lack of rain.

### **Darebin City Council:**

Allan Wicks reported that he held discussions with Parks Victoria about the new Merri Creek Park and with Melbourne Water about layback works along the Creek at Merri Park. Works were continuing at Edwardes Lake. The maps of land ownership in Darebin had been completed. Planting had been delayed at Darebin Parklands.

### **Friends of Merri Creek:**

Max Sargent reported that the Friends had participated in discussions with Parks Victoria about the new Merri Creek Park and they had concerns about lack of consideration of land north of Craigieburn Rd. Plantings had been held with MCMC. One planting with Darebin at Strettle wetland had to be cancelled due to lack of rain. The Friends' May Newsletter had just been done.

## **8 ACCEPTANCE OF BALANCE OF ALL REPORTS**

**Moved** "that the balance of all reports be received and recommendations adopted." D. Jessop / F. Brindley - **Carried.**

## **9 CORRESPONDENCE**

*(Lists of Inwards & Outwards Correspondence were sent with the Agenda and copies of the correspondence were available at the meeting.)*

**Moved** "that inwards correspondence be received and outwards approved." M. Sargent / H. Mackrell - **Carried.**

## **10 OTHER BUSINESS**

### **10.1 Mitchell landowners meeting**

Cr Robert Gordon suggested holding a meeting with landowners where MCMC could show the improvements that have occurred on the Creek. Other members supported the idea and suggestions included inviting the CMA and the NRE. MCMC staff could assist Mitchell with the organisation and make a presentation at the meeting.

## **11 NEXT MEETING**

The next Committee of Management meeting is Meeting No.100 and it is on 21/8/03 at the Whittlesea City Council offices, Ferres Boulevard South Morang at 6.15pm.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.