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Dean Karopoulos

Victorian Planning Authority
c/- Arden Precinct
Level 25, 35 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Victorian Planning Authority,

My name is Dean Karopoulos and I'm making a submission in response to draft Amendment C407melb and accompanying documents. I'm a [REDACTED].

I would like to express my support for the focus on the importance and value of water in the landscape, celebration of Indigenous heritage and emphasis on embedded sustainability in urban design displayed throughout the plan.

I work as a botanist and would like to recommend that as much densely vegetated green space as possible be provided, and that plants used to create green spaces, water management open spaces and which are planted along streets and in other urban greening contexts are all indigenous. This has myriad benefits in addition to placing further emphasis on Arden's heritage, into which the native plants which would have once grown along the riverbanks, among the floodplains and in the shade of the grassy woodlands are inextricably linked.

One such benefit would be to local fauna. Given the adjacent Moonee Ponds Creek and the close proximity to Royal Park, there is immense opportunity for the Arden precinct to support homes for native animals and provide better connectivity to established habitat across the city. In particular, diverse native understory species which provide food and shelter for small birds, insects and mammals such as Acacias, Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*), Tree Violet (*Melycitus dentatus*) and Bulokes should be a priority for planting (Ikin et al 2012). Access to information on understory plants which are native to the Melbourne region and provide good habitat is readily available on NatureKit (DELWP 2020) and widely published (Hastings & Beattie, 2006; Maron, 2007). Furthermore, several local volunteer and business groups could be engaged: Gardens for Wildlife is a volunteer organisation associated with the City of Melbourne which focuses on providing habitat for native species in urban spaces; NatureLinks is a North Melbourne business focused on Bushland Management which is located in the Arden precinct itself, and Bili nursery is a local native nursery that can provide direction and seed or tube stock.

Another is the improvement to the wellbeing of local residents. Access to green spaces is core to building a liveable community, and denser vegetation can be used to give those spaces more diverse opportunities for use. A green space consisting solely of grass provides little ecological value and limited public use, whereas denser vegetation provides private spaces for picnics and relaxation, shade, areas for children to play, and opportunities for bird-watchers. It's important that those green spaces contribute to the character of the community itself, and in using local native vegetation, Arden will have a unique urban character that is immediately recognisable by large vegetation such as Eucalypts, yet continues to provide a sense of place down to fine details such as herbs and the species of grass underfoot.

Australia is one of the worst nations for land clearing and deforestation in the world. We lead the globe in mammal extinction rates. We need to acknowledge that piece of our history and the problems we have inherited, and accept the drive to urgent action on re-vegetation and conservation. The Arden precinct carries the heritage of the workhouses, cottages, hotels, rails and factories that gave Melbourne its character and were the home of so many migrant families like my own, but it also supported the engines of industry that tore biodiversity in our country to pieces. I can't think of a better place to show that we can make a way of life that supports our native plants and animals in a way that benefits us both.

Kind Regards,
Dean Karopoulos

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