



1 September 2019

Shiran Wickramasing
Director City Planning
Boroondara City Council

By email: shiran.wickramasinghe@boroondara.vic.gov.au

Dear Shiran

RESTORATION OF HISTORIC PARK IN CAMBERWELL JUNCTION

From the outset of our campaign to restore our historic parkland, we reached out to Council in a spirit of enthusiasm and cooperation, yet we have been met continually with subtle and not so subtle forms of undermining.

It is disappointing that Council management has now squandered Council resources in an attempt to justify Council's inaction and discredit local residents who have voluntarily donated so much of their time, efforts and personal funds to campaign for the restoration of our historic park in Camberwell Junction. Is this because Council staff are personally financially benefitting from the current arrangements to the value of about \$2400 per year?

How much time and money did it cost Council to draft and post this letter to people who signed the petition? These are valuable resources funded by ratepayers. When did it become appropriate to use these resources on a campaign to defeat a community proposal in order to protect council staff carparking?

If the old questions to which you claim to be seeking answers were so important to assessment of the petition we submitted in June 2019, you could have picked up the phone and contacted any volunteer member of the Camberwell Green Steering Committee directly, whose personal contact details you have. This would have been the responsible course of behaviour. Similarly, you could have contacted Camberwell Primary School about the many issues relating to the School. Yet you

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have not done so, even though the School President wrote to Council two months ago, shortly after the petition was tabled, reiterating support for Camberwell Green and asking for the road safety concerns in Reserve Road to be addressed.

However, this would not have afforded Council staff the opportunity to engage in a public relations smear campaign by sending emails and letters to all petitioners. Not only is this a misuse of Council resources, but it is a violation of Boroondara's Council's Petition Policy which states that *"Council will not respond to all petitioners as this is considered to be the responsibility of the contact person."*

The reality is that this is simply the latest effort by Council to discourage, derail and discredit our campaign. The information you are demanding, such as traffic engineering reports and detailed design plans, is ridiculous. This is the information Council demands from a developer seeking a planning permit. It is disingenuous to continue to treat us in this vein, as Council has done from the outset. This is a point we made in our letter to the CEO on 26 September 2018. We are simply members of our local community asking that Council restore our historic parkland which Council staff have appropriated for their personal benefit.

There are various letters that we have sent to Council representatives to which we did not receive a response. You did not respond to important concerns raised in our letter of 13 September 2018. You have not responded to our request for information as to why a segment of the carpark is on land exclusively reserved by State Parliament for public gardens. Nor did you or your staff attend our launch and community meeting, which many volunteers arranged at their own expense, with a view to bringing Council, State Government and community members and organisations together. Indeed Council management, on false premises, actively dissuaded elected Councillors participating. It is however unhelpful to dwell on who answered which letters. We simply want Council to restore our historic parkland, and commence the necessary detailed design and public consultation to make this happen. To this end, and to put this issue behind us, we have attached a response to each of the questions, which in themselves reflect the attitude of Council which we find so disheartening.

Council officers may enjoy the support of the Camberwell Junction Ward Councillor, Jack Wegman, who has denigrated us in the media and who (as we recently discovered) was complicit in establishing the current arrangements that benefit Council staff. Yet, while the derision that Cr Wegman's has shown towards us is disappointing, it is a different matter for Council staff to misuse resources in this way.

We hope that at least some of the other elected Councillors will eventually begin to engage with us and take the community's concerns seriously.

Yours sincerely



Victor Franco

Chairperson

Camberwell Green Steering Committee

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cc Councillors and CEO