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**Nature Reserves Preservation Group
of Kalamunda, Inc.**

4 July 2022

TO: Rhonda Hardy, CEO, City of Kalamunda

CC:

SUBJECT: Proposed excision of portion of Barrie Oldfield Park – Reserve 29873, Sanderson Road, Lesmurdie.

Dear Rhonda,

NRPG is totally opposed to the proposed excision and subsequent lease, believing that every natural asset within the City should be retained wherever possible and that every effort should be made to prevent the loss of even the smallest of such natural areas. This submission, less detailed than is usual, is more a plea for careful consideration by Council of the future of this small, previously “*unloved patch of wilderness*” (Barrie Oldfield’s description).

The Technical Note Environmental Assessment to the Property Consultants however deserves comments, denoted in the ‘boxes’.

Section 3 Environmental Assessment

3.1 Childcare centre.

Despite the centre not being the subject of this submission, the comment that “*The tree is relatively young and, while a healthy tree, does not have any particular environmental significance*” deserves a challenge. Every tree has environmental significance, “*particular*” or not.

3.2 Outdoor Play Area.

“The areas of native vegetation are in Good to Very Good condition.”

This comment alone should be sufficient to deny the excision of this portion of the park.

“The native trees and shrubs provide some habitat for native fauna, including birds and reptiles. New Holland Honeyeaters were observed feeding on the Parrot Bush flowers during the site inspection. Black Cockatoos could potentially forage on the Jarrah trees and Parrot Bush fruit.”

Creating the Outdoor Play Area would ensure the destruction of most of the environmental values within that area. To think otherwise is naïve. Little feet and their activities would soon wipe out most of those values.

The suggestion that “*better foraging habitat for Black Cockatoos*” is available nearby is irrelevant. All such habitat is in rapid decline and should be protected.

“The recommended bushfire management measures include removal of all Parrot Bush and trimming of Grass Tree skirts as well as maintenance of the leaf litter on the ground.”

Following this recommendation would see the loss of important biodiversity functions. The dense *Banksia sessilis* provides foraging, shelter and linkage between natural areas. The *“maintenance of the leaf litter on the ground”* would involve the destruction of vital habitat for invertebrates and would also reduce the value of the existing environmental linkage.

*“Species diversity is **likely** to be able to be maintained at close to the current level with the obvious exception of Parrot Bush from the site.”*

Given this vague assertion, the precautionary principle should be applied. Should this prediction prove wrong, species diversity will decline. The loss of the Parrot Bush would be a move in that direction. Perhaps the City could have its own environmental staff examine this statement and report back to Council?

“Therefore, the removal of Parrot Bush shrubs from the play area will not adversely impact on the ability of honeyeaters to use the Willoughby Park Reserve bushland.”

Another broad assertion which should be examined in detail by environmental staff.

4. Conclusion

“PGV Environmental concludes that the proposed development of a Child Care Centre on 35 Sanderson Road Lesmurdie will not have an impact on the environmental values of the small portion of the Willoughby Park Reserve that is proposed to be created as an Outdoor Play Area.”

This misleading conclusion ignores the fact the Childcare Centre is not the direct subject of this excision. That subject is the proposal to create the Outdoor Play Area in this *“small portion”* of the reserve that will destroy its environmental values.

It will be clear to Councillors, staff and residents, that this reserve is of particular importance to the City. It owes its survival and status to Barrie Oldfield (1933 – 2015), one of the City’s most renowned past residents. Many City staff, Councillors and residents will be fully aware of the achievements of this quietly remarkable man. These should be given full weight when making a decision on the fate of this particular asset.

Barrie Oldfield was made a Freeman of the Shire (now City) of Kalamunda in 1998, awarded an OAM in 1999, in recognition of his ‘enormous contribution to the community’ and the Federal Centenary Medal in 2001. The awards recognised his longstanding commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

Increasing the relevance of Barrie Oldfield to the City and its natural environment, is the less well known history of the foundation of the Men of the Trees Australia, its ongoing environmental legacy and its link to Kalamunda. It seems appropriate that these factors should play a part in the Council’s decision making process.

His film for the Campaign to Save Native Forests, stopping the clear felling of old growth forests in the South West, was seen in England by Richard St. Barbe Baker, who travelled to Perth to found a branch of his Men of the Trees. St. Barbe Baker had founded Men of the Trees in Kenya in 1922, from where it had become a global movement. Barrie sent a copy of his interview with St. Barbe Baker to Robin Williams of The Science Show. When broadcast, it generated a flood of responses from listeners, all keen to plant trees. Later that year, Men of the Trees Australia (now Trillion Trees Australia) was founded, with Barrie as President.

In 2013 Barrie Oldfield registered a Friends group for ‘Willoughby Park Reserve’. The City supported the naming of the park, as did Landgate. Barrie spent four years documenting and photographing 87 wildflower and plant species on the reserve, subsequently publishing **‘Wildflowers from a Lesmurdie Reserve’** as a lasting record. The Echo, of November 8, 2018, stated:

“The City of Kalamunda will rename Willoughby Park on the corner of Willoughby Road and Sanderson Road, Barrie Oldfield Park, in recognition of City Freeman, Men of the Trees WA (now Trillion Trees) founder and filmmaker...”

Conclusion.

Since the City of Kalamunda Public Open Space Strategy (2018), "...acts as a guide to inform the potential transfer of POS...", the following section appears relevant to this proposal:

1.6.1 'Potential transfer of Public Open Space' lists, as one of the requirements:

4. "If such a proposal does not provide a clear benefit to the community and/or does not promote sustainability objectives, the request should not proceed."

While it may be argued that providing the 'outdoor play area' constitutes such a 'benefit', 'clear' or not, it cannot be claimed that it promotes 'sustainability objectives'. Clearly, in this case, the excision should not take place. The later section 5 refers specifically to a "proposed **excision**" of a POS reserve, as in this case and specifies the duration of the public comment period.

To excise 475.36m² (almost 20% of the park's total area) in order to create a new reserve for **lease** as a nature-based outdoor play area, **not available for public use**, is untenable.

NRPG appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposed excision and to remind staff and councillors of the unique history of this reserve and its 'discoverer,' Barrie Oldfield. Perhaps he should have the last word:

"One way to save an acre of wilderness from dying by neglect, is to catch on camera the often fleeting, often tiny, wildflowers that live there. Then show the pictures to everyone you know."

Yours sincerely,

Steve Gates

Yours faithfully,

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