

# **Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Position statement 2 on East West Link – Stage One**

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8th October 2013



## Introduction

### Park Infrastructure Supporting Urban Growth

*The AILA is the professional organisation for Landscape Architects in Australia and has no political affiliations. Victorian members have carefully reviewed available information about the “East West Link” from the Linking Melbourne Authority. Our Institute has formed the view that the project as currently proposed will cause irreparable damage to Melbourne’s largest park – Royal Park – and the already compromised, yet very important, ecological and open space corridor of Moonee Ponds Creek. In August, AILA issued a public statement that, on these grounds alone, the project should be seriously reconsidered or abandoned.*

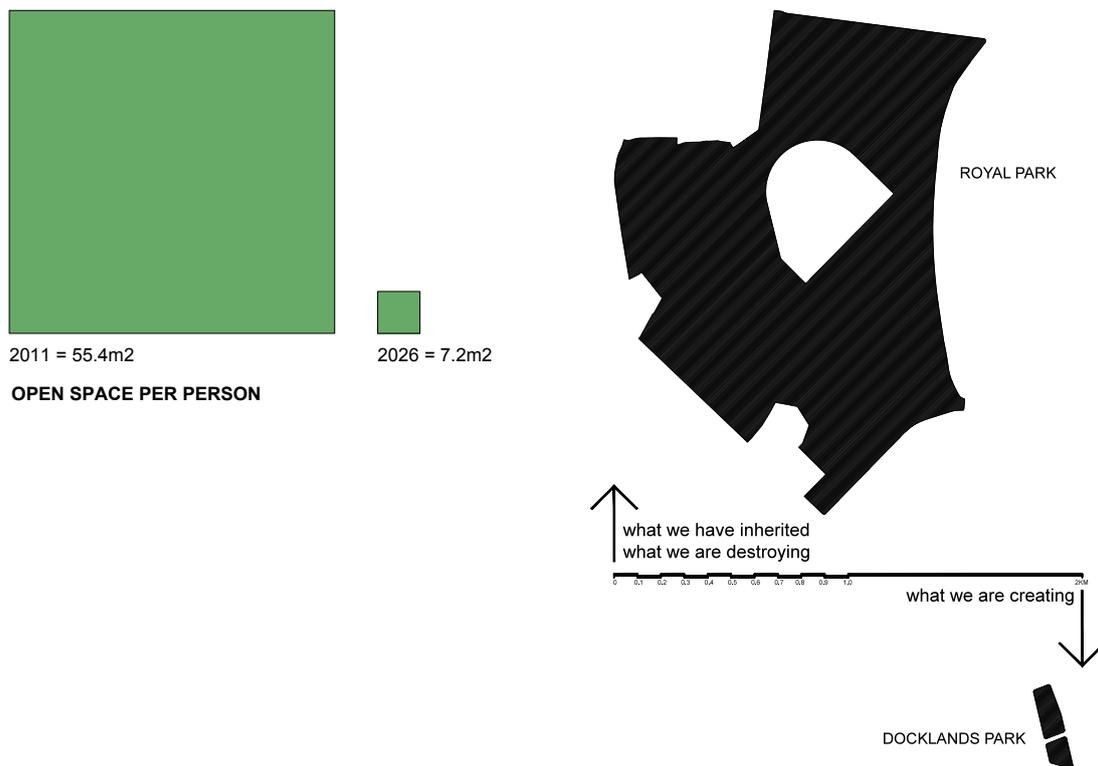
Australia’s Prime Minister elect, Tony Abbott, has promised \$11 billion for city road building, saying he aims “to be an infrastructure prime minister who puts bulldozers on the ground and cranes into our skies”. In line with this sentiment, Mr Abbott has expressed support for the Victorian Government’s proposal to build the East West Link.

However, it is AILA’s contention that Mr Abbott should recognise the role that parks play as vital city infrastructure. The value of infrastructure does not correspond to the quantity of concrete it contains. The value of urban infrastructure depends on what it does for the people of a city.

In a recent letter supporting AILA’s position on the East West Link, the Victorian president of Parks and Leisure Australia (the peak organisation representing professionals in the parks and leisure industry) sets out what AILA members know well: Accessible open spaces that attract active community use have important health benefits, helping to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, and supporting children’s development. Parks have social benefits in connecting and building communities, benefiting people with low incomes, and enhancing liveability in urban environments. They have environmental benefits in contributing to storm water management, carbon sequestration, reduction of air and noise pollution, abatement of the urban heat island effect, and protecting areas of natural and cultural heritage value. And parks have economic benefits, attracting visitors and generating tourism, attracting businesses and local employment, increasing worker satisfaction and productivity, and enhancing the market value of nearby properties.

Moreover, Parks and Leisure Australia emphasises that:

*it is projected that the population of Melbourne will increase significantly from 98,162 in 2011 to 164,832 in 2016, and [because of its impact on Royal Park, the East West Link] project is likely to result in a decrease in available parkland per person from 55.4 sqm to 33.7 sqm assuming that the current stock of land remains. The impact is further exacerbated if we consider the working population in the City as well, which will see available parkland per person reduced to 7.2 sqm per person in 2026.*



*Any reduction in land currently available in Royal Park for sport, active recreation, and passive recreation will likely create a domino effect on surrounding LGA's as there will be increased pressure placed on these municipalities to cater for displaced sporting clubs and casual users of public open space.*

The City of Melbourne's assessment of the proposed East West Link identifies sporting areas in Royal Park that are actively used up to 35 hours per week in summer peak will be lost, displacing ten sports groups and affecting up to 1000 participants per week in summer. There is no capacity at other City of Melbourne sports fields to accommodate these users, even though the City of Melbourne boasts parklands of vastly greater extent than other inner-city municipalities.

The City of Melbourne and adjoining municipalities constitute one of the major growth areas of the metropolitan area. With expansion of the inner urban population – for example in Docklands, where few open spaces are large enough to toss a frisbee, let alone to engage in community sports – pressures on existing parks have increased, and will continue to increase.

Royal Park was one of the areas reserved in the 1850s by Governor La Trobe, who recognised the importance of parks for community health and recreation. Melbourne's inheritance from this is extraordinary, in that its greatest values are only likely to be fully appreciated two centuries later, when this parkland becomes a resource for a population that will have expanded far beyond anything La Trobe could have imagined.

The proposed East West Link project will not simply build new infrastructure. It will destroy irreplaceable infrastructure that is vital to support urban growth and consolidation in the inner city area. AILA implores Mr Abbott and the Victorian Government to aspire to the vision of La Trobe, and to protect and enhance this vital piece of parkland.



*The site for the western tunnel portal will result in the loss of one of the few remaining fragments of natural vegetation.*



*Ross Shaw field, a high grade multi-use sports area home to several clubs, will be sacrificed to create an elevated freeway interchange.*