



FRIENDS OF VICTORIA GARDENS

Newsletter June 2014

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Dear Member,

2013-2014 consultations re RSL redevelopment and location of a life size statue in VG

Since the March 2014 Newsletter, the Friends committee has been actively involved in unravelling the Council consultation behind their proposed siting of a large commemorative statue as a stand-alone proposal to the RSL Memorial Upgrade. As it transpired, neither the FoVG nor the Prahran RSL had been consulted at the time of this decision (2011) and the recommendation to erect this statue in the VG had been made entirely by SCC staff. Unfortunately, this decision had also not been communicated to the FoVG at the start of the consultative process in which we engaged in 2013-2014. In addition Council staff had acted as 'go-between' the various stakeholders and this gave rise to more concerns about the consultative process.

Our own investigations yielded the following: though the Prahran RSL had first received the request from the Bruce Kingsbury Society, they had simply hand balled this onto Council and had not been kept informed since that initial involvement, having no idea of what the proposed statue would look like until April 2014 (images provided by the FoVG!). The lack of any definitive or consistent information about this statue also added to the confusion. The image of the maquette that was given to the FoVG in August 2013 turned out to be 1 of 3 possible representations (April 2014). All three examples are 'abstractions' and on sighting these in April 2014, the Prahran RSL expressed (to Vihra) their vehement opposition to it.

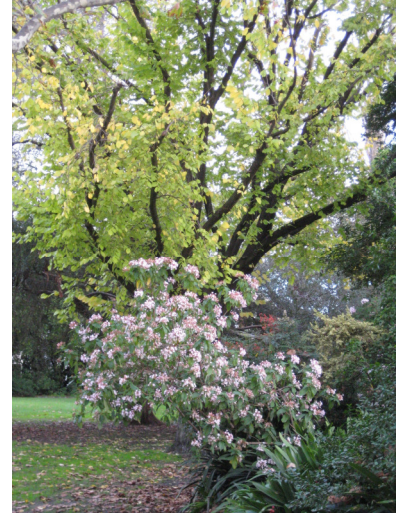
The SCC met our request for a full consultative meeting with all stakeholders in attendance and the meeting was held on May 27th. Vihra and Nobby (FoVG), representatives from the Bruce Kingsbury Society and the sculptor, as well as SCC departmental heads attended this meeting. The Prahran RSL now publicly voiced their strong opposition to the abstraction that was to be the statue and to the process that had totally excluded them to date. The RSL had understood the proposal to be a statue of Bruce Kingsbury (likeness) and not a statue commemorating Bruce Kingsbury (an abstract form).

They objected most strenuously to the proposed statue being located in Victoria Gardens. The sculptor that had been engaged by the Kingsbury Society made it clear that he did not create 'likenesses'. Nobby pointed out that the statue could not be referred to as the Bruce Kingsbury VC Statue and that its 'abstract' representation made it a 'commemorative' statue to Bruce Kingsbury VC and this raised more discussion.

Whether a 'likeness' or an 'abstraction', the FoVG repeated our opposition to the erection of this statue, not only because of its size and lack of clear space for such, but also as a separate entity to the RSL redevelopment thus increasing the 'war memorial' footprint into the Victoria Gardens. We also requested that the proposed RSL redevelopment site be clearly outlined prior to commencement of excavation/construction works so that its proposed footprint can be gauged more accurately. The FoVG reiterated our support for this redevelopment.

The lack of coordination at the SCC end was also apparent and it is clear that there are issues that can only be resolved between the SCC and the Kingsbury Society. The position taken by the Prahran RSL and the FoVG is that the Victoria Gardens are not to be used to resolve these issues.

Simon Thomas, City Works General Manager, who chaired the meeting, undertook to communicate our strongly expressed objections in his report to SCC. We await the SCC response and hope that we can report on this at our AGM on the 24th June.



Luculia gratissima Pink Swa

Victoria Gardens

We have just experienced a record in maximum temperatures in May, including a stretch of 14 days over 20 degrees, a record. Fortunately some rain has accompanied this, albeit in warmer than average temperatures, and rural areas in South Eastern Australia are experiencing the best autumn break since 1983. Victoria Gardens look impressive, and the deciduous trees have displayed rich autumn colours from red to yellow especially the Crepe Myrtle, Smoke bush and Pistachio. The plane trees have lost most of their leaves but the English Oak and Weeping Elm are yet to produce any leaf colour or drop any leaves, perhaps due to a very mild autumn, and few cold nights.

A highlight in the Gardens at the moment is the spectacular *Luculia gratissima*, growing in the western bed at the southern end (next to the entry to the playground). The genus name, *Luculia*, is the Latinised form of the Nepalese name, *Luculi Swa*. The species name, *gratissima*, is Latin for 'most pleasing'. This native of the Himalayas has clusters of bright pink terminal highly fragrant flowers (somewhere between gardenia and vanilla) and flowers in early winter when few other plants are flowering.

Luculia gratissima is one of five species of *Luculia*. All *Luculia* occur through the Himalayas, Bhutan, and Nepal to Yunnan Province in China. *Luculia gratissima* is regarded as a shrub or small tree that can reach a height of approximately 5 metres. *Luculia* generally require protection from hot winds and severe frost. Another species occasionally grown is *Luculia grandifolia* which has fragrant white flowers. Both grow well in Melbourne.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting of the Friends is the **Annual General Meeting**. You are encouraged to attend and are welcome to raise any issues on the Gardens and the Friends activities.

DATE & TIME: Tuesday 24 June 2014 at 7.45pm

LOCATION: The Studio, 64 Bendigo Street, Prahran (opposite the Flying Duck)