



Albert Sailing Club Inc
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To
Matthew Jackson
CEO, Parks Victoria
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Melbourne VIC 3000

By mail and email:
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25 June 2019

Dear Mr Jackson,

Albert Park Lake

I am writing as a follow-up to the letter to you from our immediate Past Commodore, John Whelan, dated 9 October 2018. In that letter, one of the issues raised was our ongoing concerns at the condition of Albert Park Lake in relation to water levels and aquatic vegetation levels, and the consequent struggle we have to keep sailing during the summer and autumn months when the water is low and the weed is high.

In this particular year, as forecast by John to you in October, the level of the lake reduced so much that the two sailing clubs at the lake had to cancel their sailing programs for several months. Our club has also had to cancel its annual regatta and several training programs for sailors, with a significant flow-on impact both on club revenue and our ability to attract/retain members. I have detailed at the foot of this letter the impact the cancellation of our programs this year is having on our club.

We note that the recently released Master Plan for the Albert Park Lake Reserve includes as a key framework for the future to "*celebrate the importance of the lake as the heart of the park*".

Despite this recognition of the lake as the important centrepiece for the Albert Park Reserve, there appears to be no comprehensive water management plan for Albert Park Lake and the Albert Park Reserve. Such a plan requires actions which ensure there is a healthy lake for now and the future so that the Lake can be enjoyed by recreational boating users, Park users and can also provide reliable water resources for grassed areas within the Reserve. We can find no evidence in the Master Plan of any initiatives that will ensure a permanent water supply to the Lake, which we believe is vital if the Master Plan is to be a success.

The two sailing clubs, Australian Sailing and the Sea Scouts are currently having strategic discussions and are keen to pursue the concept of a vibrant, inclusive 'Sailing Precinct' at the lake. Albert Park reserve has a quite unique and fantastic opportunity in this regard, given the lake's proximity to the city and the fact that it provides a very safe and welcoming environment for sailors, in particular children and adults keen to learn a new recreational activity, 'all ability' sailors, and our existing sailing community.

This precinct concept also aligns closely with several themes of the Master Plan. It would be a wonderful asset to the lake, attract a significant number of visitors to the Albert Park Reserve and

provide increased recreational facilities for both sailors and others. But without a permanent water supply and water management plan, none of this is possible.

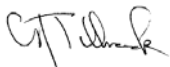
Our sailing club, and other boating clubs and organisations located in our proximity, have made repeated representations to Parks Victoria on these issues through the Albert Park Master Plan process and other forums and communications. But despite assurances that the matter is being considered, there appears to be no structured underpinning to those assurances nor a sufficient budgetary allocation for a solution to be developed.

For example, one of the primary feeders of water to the lake is from the Cowderoy St drain. It has been noted that water has not been flowing into the lake from the drain's diversion pit at the southern end of the lake for some time. The lake has thus not received the benefit of water inflows from this large drain from the recent rains and will continue to have reduced benefit from any rain until the issue is rectified. We would have thought that Parks Victoria staff at the Albert Park Reserve would be regularly monitoring inflows from this drain and ensuring that it operates to maximum effectiveness.

The condition of the lake will continue to impact this year's sailing programs. Just as importantly, will also provide a lower 'starting level' of lake water for next year's activities with the potential for a repetition of this year's issues.

We continue to seek urgent attention to these matters and are ready and available to work cooperatively and constructively on plans and actions.

Yours sincerely,



Cindy Tilbrook

Commodore
Albert Sailing Club

Albert Sailing Club regatta and program cancellations

The annual sailing regatta of Albert Sailing Club scheduled for Saturday 22nd and 23rd June has been cancelled due to the unsuitable state of Albert Park Lake. The low water level and aquatic weed growth in the Lake make the Lake unsuitable for such an event. This is a disappointment for the Albert Sailing Club members and the sailors from other Victorian clubs who sail in this annual event. The regatta has been held on a date in June for many years, with 80 to 100 boats participating each year, and a mix of adult and junior participants.

The cancellation of the regatta follows a 3 month period since early March during which the club racing and sail training programs on Albert Park Lake have been suspended due to the low water level in the Lake. During this period the water level on the indicator board next to our club has shown a water level in the range 0.7 metres to 0.8 metres.

There have been a small number of sailing boats out for casual sailing on the Lake in this period, with boat launching and sailing seriously compromised with the need for centreboards to be significantly raised and no club racing possible. We resumed our club program on Saturday 15th June. The water level has shown some improvement to 0.85 metres with some rain in late May - early June, but is still well down on the level needed to conduct uncompromised sailing programs. Participation numbers continue to be down and will only increase when water levels show further improvement.

The low water level and extent of aquatic weed growth in Albert Park Lake has had a significant negative impact on our sailing club and its operations. Each year we have between 50 and 70 winter members join our club for winter sailing over the May to September period. With our program not able to commence in May and the still compromised state of the Lake we currently have not signed up any winter members. The club committee has decided to offer a shorter winter season membership at a reduced rate, but is not confident of attracting the numbers attracted in previous years even at this lower rate. The committee also has concerns that over the next 12 months we may see a reduction in overall full year membership as some of our current and prospective members decide that the Lake is not as good a place to sail as it should be.

The cancellation of the club's annual regatta, the reduction in winter membership income, and the possible reduction in overall membership level will have a significant impact on the finances of the club this year. It will also impact in future years if the conditions experienced this year are repeated.