

### **Melbourne Bicycle User Group submission on *Fawkner Park Master Plan Issues Paper***

Melbourne Bicycle User Group (Melbourne BUG) is pleased to be able to comment on the *Fawkner Park Master Plan Issues Paper*. Melbourne BUG was established in 1992 as a representative body for cyclists who live and/or ride in the City of Melbourne. Our membership is diverse and includes city workers and residents, students of various city educational institutions and commuters who ride through the municipality. We work closely with Bicycle Victoria and the Melbourne Police Bicycle Patrol, whose representatives frequently attend our meetings.

MBUG supports the rights of cyclists to ride through Fawkner Park, but we also understand that a balance must be struck between the needs of cyclists and other park users.

### **Comments**

#### Don't oppose cyclists – work with them

Fawkner Park is an attractive place to ride and offers direct through-routes for cyclists. Paths through the Park form a useful continuation and connection of routes such as Toorak Rd, St Kilda Rd, Commercial Rd, Park St and Walsh St. It would be hard to dissuade cyclists from riding through the Park. The prudent thing for the *Master Plan* to do would be to acknowledge cyclists and find ways to accommodate them which would be acceptable to all park users.

#### Cyclists need safe places to ride

Cyclists rely on Fawkner Park as a safe extension of their riding through South Yarra and Prahran. The main roads bordering or nearby Fawkner Park (namely St Kilda Rd, Toorak Rd, Commercial Rd and Punt Rd) are very busy with motorised traffic. These roads can be difficult and dangerous for cyclists to navigate. Riders need wide, uncluttered, clearly signed bike lanes and paths, yet of the roads in proximity to Fawkner Park only St Kilda Rd has bike lanes.

#### The Fawkner Park paths are part of important routes

- Fawkner Park provides a logical and safe north-south route from the corner of Toorak Rd/St Kilda Rd to the corner of Punt Rd/Commercial Rd. This route enables cyclists to by-pass one of the busiest sections of St Kilda Rd.
- Fawkner Park makes an east-west connection between Toorak Rd and St Kilda Rd. The path leading from Toorak Rd (opposite Walsh St) to Armadale St is a useful and popular route for commuter cyclists heading towards St Kilda Rd.
- Fawkner Park paths provide direct, front-door access to the Alfred Hospital for hospital staff and visitors.
- Two schools border Fawkner Park, and five other schools exist within a 1km radius of the Park. Fawkner Park provides part of a safe route to and from these schools for students who choose to cycle. Also, Fawkner Park is an ideal place for school students (and children in general) to develop their cycling skills in a safe, relaxed environment, rather than forcing these inexperienced cyclists to learn to ride on the busy roads of the inner city.

Fawkner Park paths are amply wide to share

The shared path used by cyclists along the southern bank of the Yarra River is narrower and busier than the paths in Fawkner Park, and the Yarra path has far more restricted sightlines. Yet pedestrians and cyclists co-exist there happily. Paths in Fawkner Park are very wide (the main path is 3.4m wide, and most other paths are between 2.2m and 2.8m wide), thus allowing plenty of room for cyclists to safely pass other path users. There is no problem with sightlines anywhere in the Park.

Cyclists should respect others in shared-use facilities

Melbourne BUG acknowledges that pedestrians must have right-of-way on paths in the Park, as with any shared path, and cyclists should be educated to respect other Park users. Melbourne BUG urges the City of Melbourne to consider that the majority of cyclists will share path space responsibly and are used to doing so from the experience of using the many kilometres of shared paths throughout Melbourne.

Fawkner Park is very different to the Carlton Gardens and Fitzroy Gardens

Whereas Council's policy on the Carlton Gardens and Fitzroy Gardens specifies that those areas are to be used for "passive recreation", Fawkner Park is clearly very different. Sporting activities are part and parcel of Fawkner Park, as evidenced by the number of playing fields within the Park and the sporting clubs which use it as their training and playing base. Additionally, the layout of Fawkner Park does not approach the level of formal plantings and gardens that exist in the Carlton Gardens and Fitzroy Gardens. In fact, Fawkner Park is much closer in its nature to the Edinburgh Gardens (Fitzroy), a park in which the City of Yarra is happy to permit cycling. The presence of cyclists in the Edinburgh Gardens does not create any problems for other park users.

Melbourne BUG submits that no case can be made to classify Fawkner Park under the same "passive recreation" policy as the Carlton Gardens and Fitzroy Gardens, and that cycling should be permitted in Fawkner Park as part of the broad mix of sporting and recreational uses of the Park.

**Submission**

Melbourne BUG proposes that the paths in Fawkner Park be formally classified as shared paths, thus enabling use by both cyclists and pedestrians. The paths should be clearly signed as shared paths and (if it is felt necessary) a speed limit of ten kilometres per hour could be signed. This is the speed at which a vehicle is permitted to pass a tram on the left if there are no pedestrians on the road, and therefore has a precedent in the law in a similar yet potentially more dangerous shared-space situation.

If there is any other way that Melbourne BUG can assist the Fawkner Park Reference Group please contact us at info@melbournebug.org