

Hon Matthew Swinborn MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Dear Hon Matthew Swinborn

RE: Petition No. 026 – Proposed inquiry into Town of Victoria Park

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to my petition. I represent a group of ratepayers from the Town of Victoria Park who have wide ranging issues with the Town of Victoria Park that have escalated since the Liberal government sanctioned move to Lathlain Park by the West Coast Eagles (WCE).

As a cockatoo counter at Curtin University I was aware of the Carnaby Black Cockatoo roost in the WCE zone of Lathlain Park, where 98 old growth trees (many natives and including a 200 year old protected Tuart tree) were to be felled for the development. I raised my concerns to the Town of Victoria Park in emails, submissions, presentations, petitions, letters and feedback surveys, eventually calling a Special Electors meeting in June 2016. All “citizen” science, the local government “environment evaluation” tool, the Birdlife roost map were ignored and the roost was destroyed.

Motion 10 from the Special Electors Meeting 2016 questioned the towns record keeping and the failure of the Town to implement the NBN funded document management upgrade in 2012. Documents provided to approving authorities and for community consultation were incorrect (Attachment 1.3). In 2015 town officer Tina Ackerman stated in council documents that the State Record Audit had been successfully completed, however it was an internal audit and the State Records audit is to be conducted this year.

This led to the discovery that the Town had not produced a business case for community consultation for the WCE Lathlain Park development until after the Major Land Transaction Plan was signed – in breach of section 3.59 of the Local Government Act. We had legal advice that we could pursue this matter however were unable to put up the \$100 000 surety for the legal action.

After a presentation to the Joint Planning Committee questioning the veracity of the Towns community consultation I found out the Town had re-engaged the same consultation group that it used for the 2013 non-WCE proposal that was widely accepted by the community – giving access to the previous positive feedback. This contract was granted without following the correct tendering process. There has been a lack of transparency in the community consultation for this project, with members of the Community Reference group lodging official complaints about how the group was run, football members’ consultation used to represent community consultation and use of feedback during a WCE “fun day” and a Perth Demons member’s session at the ground presented as “community consultation”.

By fast tracking the approval process for the WCE development the town effectively silenced the community and used the media to discredit and vilify objections. In the past 18 months I have gathered evidence that the Town deliberately employs these tactics so they can mislead and demoralise the community. The move of the Victoria Park Hockey Club to Harold Rossiter Park is an example. The Town has spent almost \$150 000 in 3 separate business cases in an effort to get a report that supports the move. The move was a 2015 election promise made by the Mayor to the President of the Hockey Club yet widely opposed by the locals that use the park.

A recent survey on astro turf asked very specific gender questions (Appendix 4.2) which the Town said were normal survey questions. A review of 5 other Councils online surveys confirmed none of their surveys even asked a gender question, however the survey results gave essential gender data in the Jarrah Ward. This is Cr Olivers ward - who came out as gay at council meeting in September when he provided the decisive vote to fly the Gay Pride flag from Councils flag pole during the SSM vote (misuse of council resource complaints have been made with the Electoral Commission and State Ombudsman).

I have now taken an interest in the expenditure of the Town as rates have increased substantially for the past 3 years – the previous year being 5,8% cents in the dollar increase - consistent with mismanagement and poor decision making. This years rate increase equates to the purchase of airconditioning for council building \$970 000; electric bikes \$12000; loses at Aqua and Leisure life - \$54000 and \$300000 on the Evolve community engagement program. The Town said the increases directly related to water, power and bitumen but these costs have not increased

The Town run Leisure Life and Aqualife centres lost an average of \$54000/year over the past 3 years (Attachment 2.2), and now the council are spending \$34 000 to review their operations (attachment 2.3). A complaint has been lodged regarding

the undeclared interest of a town officer who belongs to the triathlon club that has majority usage over the facilities at Aqualife. This prevents usage by families of the facility and therefore limits expenditure at the café outlets.

I have recently been questioning the Towns lack of transparency regarding their relationship with the Vic Park Collective. The Collective are invited by the Town to participate in the strategic planning of the Town despite their lack of qualifications. The Collective targets the youth demographic, leaving seniors, immigrants; older couples without a voice. The Town spends \$35 000/month on artistic entertainment (face painter, hobby farms) but the events they are booked for are run by the Vic Park Collective e.g. the weekly farmers market. The Collective pays a peppercorn lease for a prime Albany Hwy property yet no reports are submitted by them to the Town. The Collective is the only community group the CEO regularly meets with.

As rates have increased the Town spends more on consultants than essential services and what is provided is sub standard, for example road works having to be redone e.g. Harvey St (Appendix 14.1), outsourcing of services (Appendix 14.2) and cleaning/maintenance issues outside of Albany Hwy strip (Appendix 14.3).

Significant delegation to the CEO and his staff as per below raises significant concerns due to the number of complaints about staff not registering their interest. Additionally, staff are not aware of correct documentation procedure as evidence by meeting agendas often missing information and even pages. Inconsistent advise and application of planning policies result in multiple presentations and petitions to council to assist in rectifying poor decisions.

The CEO will not engage with community groups who do not agree with him – e.g. Victoria Park Swim Club representatives were told not to go to the media re lack of swim lanes as they will get nothing if they did. I currently have a bullying and harassment complaint lodged with the Ombudsman after the CEO and the Mayor verbally attacked me at the 10 October council meeting as documented in attachment 16. The Facebook comment by Fmr Cr Windrum clearly demonstrate the values and ethics of this Council.

The tendering process is also questionable. For example, 32 engineering services were put out for tender under several sub categories. Only 18 tenders were received, so these companies now engaged under several sub categories as part of a 3 year contract. There was a tender for tree maintenance with only 2 tenderers applying. One tender was aprox \$1m more but Beaver Trees won the contract. They have now been paid \$2.4m this calendar year - significantly over their tender contract and more in line with the failed tender. Expressions of Interest were called for the development of the Urban Tree Strategy. The Town claims only 2 submissions were received however I know I lodged a 3rd submission under my Help Rebuild Lathlain Park banner (registered community organisation with the Urban Bushland Council). The Vic Park Collective and Vic Park Urban Tree Network 's EOI were awarded the right to develop the contract, however the process has been called into question by town officers themselves.

Residents of Burswood Park have an ongoing dispute with the town regarding noise levels at Crown Towers. Burswood residents have already sued the town at a cost of over \$2m yet the Town refuses to work collaboratively with the residents and Freedom of Information documentation proves the Town has lied to them regarding their actions to resolve the ongoing noise issue, costing the ratepayers a fortune

Mayor Vaughan's travel claims were referred to the CCC who referred them to the police. The ratepayers have now paid \$8900 for a report by a person who's business no longer exists that "cleared" him of any wrong doing. This was widely publicised as the Mayor being "cleared" however that is not the case.

The above submission represents a selection of ongoing issues with the Town of Victoria Park. Our group has detailed evidence of many fiscal and governance issues that collectively result in the same outcome – the ratepayers of the Town of Victoria Park are financially penalised by the – at best – mismanagement of the Town. The Towns inability to have effective document control has permeated all levels, enabling the concealment of issues and the production of misleading or falsified documentation. Ratepayers are bullied and intimidated into submission. This is not a functional council abiding by their values and policies and we the ratepayers respectfully request some help by our representatives to clean it up.

Kind regards,

Anita Treasure