

25 August 2015

Mr Aaron Higginbotham
Sport and Recreation Development Officer
Public Space
City of Port Phillip
Private Bag No 3
St Kilda Vic 3182

Dear Mr Higginbotham

GETTING OUR COMMUNITY ACTIVE: CITY OF PORT PHILLIP
DRAFT SPORT AND RECREATION STRATEGY 2015-24

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject paper. As an organisation, we do not believe that your questionnaire, which appears more designed for individuals than groups, offers us sufficient flexibility to address the issues involved, and we have consequently adopted a submission approach.

BWV endeavours not only to look after the interests of the estimated 250,000 people who walk in Victoria's bushland, but also seeks to represent those of the approximately one million recreational walkers in Victoria who exercise in this manner (estimate derived from Strategy page 8 – "Walking for exercise is the most popular sport and recreation activity, with more than a quarter of Australians participating.") in regional and urban parks and along our magnificent foreshores, including backpackers, travellers and visitors (referenced Strategy page 7). Many of BWV's clubs are based in Melbourne, and their walks may be distributed between urban and regional areas.

The City of Port Phillip has some of the State's finest beaches – South Melbourne, Middle Park, St Kilda, Elwood – and has thankfully provided promenades that take the walker/cyclist/wheelchair user/roller-skater from one end of your 11km (Strategy page 6) of foreshore to the other. In the St Kilda area, there are several paths that criss-cross the beachside park, providing alternative routes for walker and cyclist (many of our walkers also cycle) alike. Additionally there are piers, the wonderful lookout at Point Ormond and many restaurants that cater for the needs of the myriads of visitors who come to Port Phillip to enjoy its many attractions, including water sports, walking and cycling. Your city also encompasses the famous track around Albert Park Lake beloved of walkers and runners alike.

BWV is impressed by the infrastructure you have created to cater for walkers and cyclists, and with their connectivity to adjoining local government areas (2.3.3 and 2.4.2 page 9 and 3.3 page 10 Implementation Plan refer), which means that there is plenty to occupy the serious walker as well as the lunchtime stroller. All your bayside paths

function as both walking and cycling routes, and there is an element of danger in that arrangement (although sightlines are usually very good), as well as some diminution of enjoyment for both types of user, because of that risk. BWV prefers dedicated walking tracks, but we would rather share a trail than not have access to it at all, and we realise that in a built-up area like Port Phillip, there are very few options for establishing discrete walking or cycling tracks. For the same reason, we understand that providing a walkway connecting Albert Park Reserve to the beach, while desirable, is not particularly feasible.

Since its foundation in 1934, BWV has supported a variety of environmental conservation programs, not only because they were intrinsically worthwhile, but because walkers want to enjoy seeing native flora and fauna as they walk. We therefore applaud your regulation of dogs in beach areas because their presence can be inimical to the concept of environmental protection. We note with approval also, your wishing to meet “environmentally-sustainable objectives” (Strategy page 13, Implementation page 8, 3.3.7 Implementation page 13).

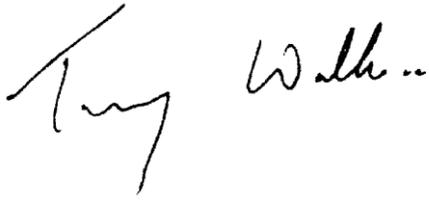
We thoroughly support the concept of walking for exercise, fitness and a sense of wellbeing, helping to obviate obesity and chronic illness (Strategy page 8). Your acknowledgement that *informal* recreation-based activities will have a significant part to play in this context (Strategy pages 7, 8, 11), particularly in the light of your statement (Strategy page 9) that “participation rates for many organised sports have held constant or declined”, seems sensible to us. We note, too, your observation (Strategy page 7) that “Walking, cycling and swimming were the three most participated activities”. There is no doubt that you will need to be looking very seriously to informal recreational walking to assist with your objectives of improving health and reducing obesity in Port Phillip. That being the case, you will need firstly to maintain existing infrastructure adequately (Implementation page 10 and 3.2.4 page 12) and upgrade it (Strategy pages 10,12,15) in line with increasing population pressure, especially from the rapidly-growing aging segment which is more likely to adopt walking as an exercise than something more strenuous.

We note your reference (Strategy page 13) to the “Installation and upgrade of public space signage”, a sentiment we totally support. With shared walking/cycling/roller-skating/wheelchair-user paths, it is absolutely necessary, for safety reasons, to make walkers and other utilisers aware that they are not exclusive users, and to identify pinch-points where there is the most potential for accidents.

It is clear that more can be done towards developing accessibility (page 13 Implementation) and promoting the sport and recreation facilities that the City of Port Phillip offers, and we accordingly endorse your suggestion (Implementation page 5) to “Develop an interactive map that shows information on all sport and recreational infrastructure in Port Phillip”. We submit that this should clearly show all walking paths on the foreshore and in parks within the municipality. We unequivocally concur with your Tasks 1.4.4, 1.4.6, 1.4.7 and 1.4.8 (Implementation page 6) that go towards improving walking facilities in Port Phillip.

We trust that you will fully take into account our comments in your deliberations prior to finalisation of the Strategy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Walker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline for the name "Walker".

Tony Walker
President
Body Text