



## Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd.

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Parks and Recreation  
City of Melbourne  
Po Box 1603  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

To Whom It May Concern,

**Re: Open Space Strategy – Have your Say**

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited (VALS) has some concerns with the process by which the City of Melbourne (COM) is going about seeking feedback on an Open Space Strategy (Strategy).

It is difficult to engage with the COM about the Strategy as information about the proposed Strategy is scant. For instance, VALS has the following questions:

- What is the motivation behind the Strategy?
- What is the purpose of the Strategy?
- What measures have been put in place to ensure that the Indigenous Australian voice can be heard about the Strategy?
- How will the different opinions about what should be included in the Strategy be reconciled?

VALS argues that it is essential that Indigenous Australians are given the opportunity to have their say on the Strategy. This is especially the case in light of recent events at Kings Domain involving “Camp Sovereignty”, the disproportionate impact of public drunkenness laws on Indigenous Australians, and Indigenous Australian’s use of public space as cultural space. VALS argues that mainstream organisations should be pro-active in obtaining the Indigenous Australian perspective by developing a consultation process that targets Indigenous Australians. Failure to do this will result in overlooking the Indigenous Australian voice as barriers prevent Indigenous Australians engaging with mainstream consultation processes (ie: no computer to access the survey due to low socio-economic status).

VALS urges the COM to engage with the Indigenous Australian community by:

- Publicizing the invitation to have a say on the Strategy within the Indigenous Australian community. VALS suspects that the publicity of the invitation has been limited as VALS only became aware of the invitation through good fortune rather than good management on the part of COM. Thus, it is a logical assertion

that many Indigenous Australians are unaware of the invitation and did not attend any of the public forums in April 2006.

- Organising an Indigenous Australians specific public forum so they can have their say on the Strategy.
- In particular, seek out the opinion of Indigenous Australians who are working within Local Government and have some expertise on the matter.

VALS intends to draft a more detailed submission in relation to the Strategy, but felt it important to highlight the above issues at this stage of the process in order to facilitate maximum input into the process by Indigenous Australians.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this preliminary submission and if you have any queries please contact Greta Jubb (Research Officer).

Yours Sincerely

**Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited**

**Frank E. Guivarra**  
**Chief Executive Officer**