

## 9. BEXLEY RESERVE

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The purpose of this report is to update the Board on progress with planning for Bexley Reserve and to present a concept plan for short term capital works proposed for this financial year.

### CONTEXT OF REPORT

Funding programmed for this financial year has contributed to consultation, design and a range of improvements in many areas of the reserve. Consultation with key interest groups and local residents is ongoing. Agreement was reached through recent consultation that the remaining capital funding for this financial year should be spent on landscape treatment at the reserve entrance on Pages Road, and to establish trial plantings of indigenous species as recommended by Dr Colin Meurk.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An overall landscape concept plan for Bexley Reserve is being developed in consultation with key interest groups and the neighbouring community to respond to the Management Plan 1992, the Green Edge proposal and the aspirations of the user groups. It identifies appropriate activities for different areas, and planting is used to define the areas and provide shelter.

Although this concept will continue to be evolved, some areas are ready to take shape now. A top priority identified for this financial year is to establish feature planting at the Pages Road entrance, and to establish some trial plots of planting for shelter.

The next steps, which have been identified for successive staging are: progressing the design; implementing the complementary entrance features such as signage, wall and sculptural elements; planting around the secondary pedestrian and cycle entrances on Pages Road, Rowan Avenue and Rowses Road; supplementary planting on Pages Road frontage; framework planting in the 'dog park' area and Knight's pond restoration. These elements will be implemented as funding becomes available. However, additional funding will need to be sourced for the complementary entrance features.

### RELEVANT CURRENT POLICY

Environmental Design - Park Design and Management Plans.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

#### Landscape development and planting

Feature planting is proposed to begin on the reserve frontage between Pages Road and the existing fence line and entranceway to Bexley Reserve. The planting has been designed to be complemented by signage and entranceway elements such as a feature wall, including a sculptural element, and gates, as funding becomes available.

The design for the entrance planting has been carefully chosen to blend with a number of factors. A mix of native species has been recommended by Dr Colin Meurk for trialing in Bexley Reserve. Trial plots of these species have been included as a feature throughout the reserve design. A mix of native grass species (consistent with the trial plot list) around the entrance creates a 'welcome carpet'. This theme is continued through inside the entrance to create the effect of narrowing the entrance and 'drawing people in' to the reserve.

The eastern side of the entrance and suggested 'dog park' area includes exotic species such as gum and pine species which will create some quick feature shelter and shade effects for the dog park, as well as act as 'nurse crop' for the indigenous plants requiring shelter to establish. Other areas will be developed incrementally to enhance shelter and shaping of the reserve. Concept plans will be presented at the Board meeting.

## **ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Entrance**

The current widely used entrance on Bexley Road is shortly due to be closed off, when the next phase of the expressway development is implemented. This will necessitate the development of the Pages Road entrance as the main entrance. Sealed access roads and car parks are already in place in anticipation of Pages Road becoming the main entrance. Currently this entrance on Pages Road has low visibility and limited appeal, and it is rarely used.

Capital funding of approximately \$11,000 is available in the current financial year for implementing the entranceway planting elements of the design. The balance of the total capital funding allocated for 2001/02, \$50,000, has already been utilised on providing a range of 'essentials', as well as covering considerable project management, planning, consultation and design fees. Items implemented to date in this financial year include providing a new driveway to the BMX area, installing post and cable fencing up the driveway and along the frontage of other entrances to the reserve, adjustments to fencing of various stock paddocks, gates and stiles, and a range of associated elements. A (separately funded) new toilet block is scheduled for construction near the BMX track in the next month.

Bexley Reserve is an important site which requires significant rehabilitation. It services a community with vision and high aspirations for the role it can play in the Bexley area. Considerable funding additional to that already programmed will be required to realise the potential of the reserve, and consideration needs to be given to how this funding may be sourced.

## **RESULTS OF CONSULTATION**

Consultation was undertaken with Bexley Reserve interest groups as part of the Green Edge proposal in May 2001. Feedback from residents and interest groups indicated that although the general principles of the concept were supported, there was resistance to the form of the concept. The main objections were to the suggestion of dune like mounds on which it was proposed to have native coastal bush species planted, the expense of bringing in the large quantities of soil proposed and the effect of the weight of the soil on the reclaimed landfill. Concern was also expressed that a prior commitment had been made to the groups to follow the 1992 Management Plan, and it was implied that the Green Edge proposal would replace the Management Plan.

The Bexley Residents' Association expressed their concerns in letters of 20 May, 30 May and 16 June 2001 and also made a request to staff for improved consultation on the development of the concept plan. At a meeting at the Shirley Service Centre on 18 June 2001 to address these requests, it was agreed that a design workshop would be held to review the 1992 Management Plan and to decide on priorities that could be implemented with the remainder of the funding available this financial year.

Consultation was undertaken with the BMX club on the location of the new toilet block. A letter box drop with information about the workshop and the proposed BMX toilet location was circulated around 16 February 2002, to approximately 2,500 households.

A design workshop was held on 25 February 2002, attended by 15 residents. A review of the management plan was presented, acknowledging aspects that have been implemented. This was followed by exploring ideas for expressing an identity for Bexley Reserve. Areas for appropriate activities were considered and priorities identified. It was agreed that a top priority was to establish planting around the Pages Road entrance, and to establish plots of shelter planting with species selected from the trial plot lists.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The concept plan for Bexley Reserve is being developed in conjunction with a review of the Management Plan and input from local residents. Implementation is to be staged over a number of years, with capital funding already programmed over the next five years. Planting around the entrance and shelter planting (according to the trial plot list) is to be implemented this financial year.

- Recommendations:**
1. That the information be received.
  2. That the Board approve the overall landscape concept proposed.
  3. That the Board support the implementation in the current financial year of planting around the Pages Road entrance and establishment of shelter planting as per trial plot lists.
  4. That the Board support accessing additional funding to enable subsequent stages of the plan to be implemented.

**Chairperson's Recommendation:** That the abovementioned recommendations be adopted.