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In-House Memorandum

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Irrigating the Maranoa Gardens

Public Gardens are an important part of municipal open space and have significant public health and recreational benefits. The use of water in public open space is critical to ensure long-term viability for future generations. Policy directions often focus on sustainability and biodiversity, but emphasis also needs to be placed on integrated water use management.

Maranoa Gardens is a public garden located in the inner eastern suburb of Balwyn and is dedicated to Australian native plants. The Gardens began life in 1901 as a private garden and, by September 1926, were formally opened to the public. The Gardens are managed by the City of Boroondara and are described by it as a 'unique regional open space' with a native botanical collection visited by people from all over Melbourne¹.

Maranoa Gardens are irrigated using water sourced from a potable mains supply managed by Yarra Valley Water. Day-to-day management of the gardens is undertaken by gardeners at the site.

Land occupied by the gardens is zoned Public Parks and Recreation Zone. The purpose of this zone is to recognise areas for public recreation and open space, to protect and conserve areas of significance and provide for commercial uses where appropriate (Cl.36.02). Buildings and works carried out under the *Water Industry Act 1994* or *Water Act 1989* require a permit (Cl.36.02-2).

The Gardens are registered on the Victoria Heritage Database (National Trust) and are recognised as being of state cultural significance², with the Statement of Significance including the following grounds:

- For the manner in which their development demonstrates attitudes to Australian flora;
- As one of few Victorian public gardens devoted exclusively to Australian plants; and
- As a representative example of a local park.

The Gardens' management is directed by municipal-wide recommendations under the Boroondara 'Open Space Strategy'³. The strategy's municipal-wide recommendations include actions to support habitat corridors, large broad spreading canopy trees, moisture absorbing surfaces, sustainable capture and reuse of water, reduced reliance on potable water, integrated stormwater capture, treatment and reuse, integration of sustainable water reuse infrastructure features, ecologically sustainable design and use of sustainable materials:

*"[T]here is a need to investigate sustainable water capture, treatment storage and use in the urban landscape including in open space. This has been reflected in design and management recommendations along with the recommended sizes of open space that consider inclusion of these features in future open space."*⁴

Despite these policy statements, there is a need to harmonize principles of sustainability with principles of environmental conservation. They need to be matched with on-the-ground best-practice procedures for water use and management.

¹ *Boroondara Open Space Strategy* (Boroondara City Council Department of Planning, 2013), p.16

² http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/reports/report_place_local/70197, accessed 19/11/14

³ *Boroondara Open Space Strategy* (Boroondara City Council Department of Planning, 2013)

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.16

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Given the size of the open space network within Boroondara, as well as the wider diaspora of Australian municipalities, there is significant potential across municipalities to further align policy objectives with best-practice garden and turf management. At minimum, there would be benefit in integration of water, drought and climate change management plans with water-use quantification techniques, soil management principles and auditing practices.

Cameron Algie
19 November 2014

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