



D. Reynolds

Dr Megan O'Shea

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A Vision for Wildflower Grasslands Resplendent in Sunshine

Dear Councillor,

Imagine a place in Sunshine where mobs of kangaroos roam and Wedge-tailed Eagles soar....

Actually, you can see these things for yourself, as such a place does exist in the grasslands at Solomon Heights and River Valley Estates. If you take a closer look, you will also find some species that are iconic for Brimbank, such as the charming Striped Legless Lizard and delicate Spiny Rice-flower (it doesn't really have spines but it does have a dainty flower). All of this is under threat from proposed developments, general mistreatment and lack of appropriate management. With a bold vision and a structured plan, these grasslands can be restored to be a jewel in the crown of Brimbank's network of ecologically significant sites. Can you please help by encouraging Council to make resources available for the development of such a vision?

I write to you as a resident who grew up and still lives in Brimbank; and also as an ecologist working primarily in the grasslands in Cairnlea but also further afield. Over decades, I have been witness to changes in the local natural environment of Brimbank and I have an intimate knowledge of some of our grasslands and the species that live in them.

Today there are very few sites in Brimbank that support unprotected high quality remnant native grasslands, and it is now time to ensure that what remains is secured and properly managed. The grasslands at Solomon Heights and River Valley Estates are significant for their connectivity to the Maribyrnong River escarpment, enabling the movement, foraging and nesting of animals upstream to Brimbank Park and through Keilor to Sydenham Park. Without these connected tracts of open space, animals such as the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Echidna, Swamp Wallaby and Wedge-tailed Eagle may be lost from the landscape and ecosystem.

There have been several detailed studies of the flora at these sites, revealing in excess of 90 different species of native plant. Significantly, eight of these species are recognized as being rare or threatened, including an impressive population of 436 individual Spiny Rice-flower plants.

The native grasslands at these sites and the colourful array of wildflowers that they support are worthy of celebration. Brimbank is *the home* of the Spiny Rice-flower and Striped Legless Lizard in Melbourne. I strongly encourage Brimbank City Council to develop a vision that protects the natural heritage of these sites, whilst providing ways for our local community to appreciate and celebrate their wonders.

I have visited Solomon Heights grassland many times. With stunning views of the city skyline, I have seen Melbourne nestled amongst brooding clouds and glistening in the clear sun of a spring day. Looking along the train tracks, there is a sense of 'country Australia' with enormously long freight trains making their way to cross the Whitten Bridge and the Darling Flour Mills reminding us of the industrial heritage of Brimbank.

With my family, I have ridden my bike along the Maribyrnong River Trail and worked my way through the new River Valley Estate to emerge on top of the escarpment – how wonderful and informative it would be if the trail was designed so that other cyclists and walkers were directed from the depths of the valley to the escarpment top to be rewarded for their toil with such spectacular views and a grassland wonderland to explore!

The environment at Solomon Heights and River Valley Estate is important from ecological, cultural and social perspectives. I strongly urge Brimbank City Council to develop a vision that ensures the protection of the grassland values and iconic species at these sites.

Kind regards
Dr Megan O'Shea

