



• Warren McGrath discusses the state of Hyde Park's lakes with Vincent councillor Ian Ker.

# Claisebrook boss speaks out for Hyde Park lakes

## THE article

"Billabong plan for park" (Voice, April 23, 2005) has caused a strong reaction from the local community regarding the Vincent Habitat Report's recommendation to

remove plane trees from Hyde Park.

People have contacted the Claise Brook Catchment Group with feelings ranging from alarm to interest.

There is no plan to remove the plane trees, and many of our members, myself included, would expect there to be very good justification for any proposal that would affect the park's values.

However, it is certain that Hyde Park's water quality problems need to be addressed for the benefit of both the environment and the park's heritage.

Hyde Park was once a natural wetland. It was converted into a European-style park early last century, turning the wetland into two lakes with islands and limestone edging walls and the planting of many exotic trees. The result is a park which is very pleasant, shady and an oasis within our urban environment.

It is a natural result of human settlement, however, that over time lakes and rivers build up nutrients, resulting in poor water quality and, if severe, algal blooms.

These may be harmful to animal

**WARREN McGRATH** is the current chair of the Claise Brook Catchment Group, a local community group particularly interested in water quality and native wildlife habitat issues. As guest columnist Mr McGrath argues the recent kerfuffle over cutting down Hyde Park's plane trees misses the fact that the park needs a holistic approach to fix its troubles.

and human health and cause problems such as botulism which can kill water birds.

The build-up occurs because more nutrients go into the lakes than are used up by natural processes such as plant uptake.

To find a long term, sustainable solution for the water quality problems at Hyde Park, the whole community has to work at reducing nutrient inputs from the lakes' catchment, not just within Hyde Park.

Most important, although it is a favourite pastime of many, is not to feed the ducks at the lakes. Unfortunately the introduction of bread into their diet can be harmful to them and increase the amount of duck poo (a major source of nutrients) going into the lakes. There is plenty of food for the birds there already and there are other ways of interacting with wildlife.

Always pick up dog poo from the park and surrounding streets to prevent it washing into the park lakes.

Reduce the use of fertilisers and manures on home lawns and gardens – the lakes are at least

partly in contact with the groundwater, which may be becoming increasingly contaminated from fertiliser use. The Town of Vincent has already stopped

using any fertiliser on the lawns at Hyde Park.

Use non-deciduous varieties of plants in gardens and on verges, preferably WA species, which do not drop large amounts of leaves onto the streets to then flow into the lakes during storms.

Solving the problems at Hyde Park will come from many initiatives, including actions such as those described above and those of the Town of Vincent, each with an incremental benefit that in total will add up to a healthier park.

Increased street sweeping and raking up the leaves from the plane trees in autumn will reduce the amount of matter flowing into the lakes. The group is also suggesting bamboo and other weeds are removed from the island in the eastern lake and replaced with native sedges, reeds and paperbark trees. The sedges will take up nutrients, helping to clean the water, and have the added benefit of providing habitat for nesting birds.

If you would like more information about the Claise Brook Catchment Group, contact coordinator Sally Lake on 9227 9514.