

Merle Hathaway
Save Our Gong & Gardens
PO Box 114
Buninyong VIC 3357

0419 324042
merlehathaway@icloud.com

Dear Secretary and Committee,

Re: Buninyong Botanic Gardens at threat

I write on behalf of a grass roots community group, **Save Our Gong & Gardens** to alert your organisation of imminent radical changes with the loss of almost 100 trees in the Buninyong Botanic Gardens. We urgently seek your help.

This is one of the earliest Botanic Gardens in Victoria, established 1851, known and loved for its quiet beauty and mature trees, some individually listed, and its 'wilder' section, a shallow lake, The Gong. Between the two sections of the Botanic Gardens is an embankment, formed to create a lake from what was springs and wetland. The whole area is State Heritage Registered.

The City of Ballarat has decided that the embankment is at risk of failure. Despite there never having been an incident, it has embarked on a drastic plan, currently out to tender, to permanently remove all trees both sides of the embankment. On the formal gardens side there are 42 Strawberry Trees, while the lake side has at a lower level, a dense bank of willows which provides shelter and habitat for the many waterfowl and fish. The Council's plan is to rebuild the embankment with a wall of mainly rock on the lake side and only knee-high shrubs on the top and formal Gardens side.

In an earlier Masterplan, 2014, the willows were identified as heritage plantings and marked "to be retained".

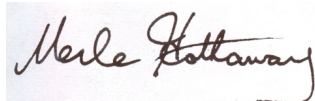
The Council is applying recommendations intended for much larger dams, that trees should not be planted on "dam walls". It has refused to look at any alternative, other than to completely drain the Gong.

I am a committee member of the Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens (FBBG), which has opposed the Council plan from the start. The FBBG has commissioned a detailed report, written by several experts in this field, to present to Heritage Victoria, which must approve the final plan. "**The Buninyong Botanic Gardens: Our Future Our Heritage**" includes an alternative proposal to alleviate any possible risk and images of other solutions to similar scenarios.

We ask that your organisation consider supporting us by writing to the City of Ballarat and Heritage Victoria. I attach two petitions: if your members would like to sign these, please return to me any printed, original copies.

We fear that when the new Council is formed, a winning contractor will soon be selected, and we will have only a small window of opportunity in which to object via Heritage Victoria.

Yours sincerely



Merle Hathaway

Cc: Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens: wk.hulston@bigpond.com