



SAVE TOOTGAROOK SWAMP

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## Press Release. 12<sup>th</sup> June 2016

### A risk like no other.

The fight Save Tootgarook Swamp Incorporated has been preparing for such a long time has finally arrived.

The largest development application the Tootgarook Swamp has seen in recent years is now before us. Core features of the swamps biodiversity hang by a thread ready to be unraveled, the very existence of the Tootgarook Swamp's current values hangs in the balance.

Since the arrival of Europeans this magnificent and unique wetland has held on in the face of all the changes that came with human advancement but it would be wrong to believe that a place as wonderful as this could continue on and not reach a breaking point in the wake of such development pressures without a voice to speak out in its defence.

Over the next two weeks, Save Tootgarook Swamp Inc. will be that voice at the Victorian Civil and Administration Tribunal in one of the most important environmental cases the Tootgarook Swamp and indeed the Mornington Peninsula has seen. With the support of our members and the community we will fight strongly against this subdivision development of 100 lots in the wetland that threatens to wipe out all that the community, both local and abroad, have come to appreciate about this very special place and wish to preserve for those who come after us.

The issues are wide and vast, encompassing an array of areas that will have wide ranging consequences that go beyond the environment to the very core of appropriate planning on the Mornington Peninsula and indeed Victoria as a whole. Issues to be addressed over the intensive 7-day hearing will cover the former landfill and the pollution risk it brings, risk to human and environment health, groundwater modification, flooding, inappropriate zoning, 23 threatened species, and 5 endangered vegetation classes, outstanding illegal native vegetation clearance offences and bushfire risk to name a few.

The Tootgarook swamp, also sometimes called Boneo swamp is found near Rosebud on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria.

The swamp has very high groundwater dependent ecosystem value, and represents the largest remaining remnant natural freshwater marsh in the entire Port Philip and Western Port region<sup>1</sup>, and the site being recognised by the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Industries as a Biosite of state significance for its biodiversity and natural values.

The site itself is critical habitat even within the greater wetland for the ICUN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) red and EPBC (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999) listed Australasian Bittern, it is also utilised by EPBC migratory species such as the Latham's Snipe, Sharp Tailed Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Eastern Great Egret and White-bellied Sea-eagle. The land is also important habitat for a number of State significant species such as Australasian Shoveler, Ballion's Crake, Eastern Cattle Egret, Freckled and Hardhead Ducks, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Lewin's Rail, Nankeen Night-Heron, Pied Cormorant, Royal Spoonbill, Spotted Harrier, Glossy Grass Skink, Southern Toadlet, Long-necked Tortoise and Swamp Skink. The site just doesn't also contain important fauna but also important floristic vegetation communities, one state listed Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) South Gippsland Plains Grassland, and 4 EVC's of State Conservation significance, Aquatic Herbland, Brackish Wetland, Sedge Wetland, and, Tall Marsh.

The Australasian Bittern, is also part of the federal governments threatened species strategy, in which Greg Hunt announced its goal was

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.savetootgarookswamp.org/uploads/1/7/4/3/17433307/2015\\_tootgarook\\_wetland Ramsar nomination feasibility study m. south a. costen bmt wbm .pdf](http://www.savetootgarookswamp.org/uploads/1/7/4/3/17433307/2015_tootgarook_wetland Ramsar nomination feasibility study m. south a. costen bmt wbm .pdf)  
Page 37 Mornington Peninsula Shire Tootgarook Wetland Ramsar Nomination Feasibility Study BMT WBM



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to halt and reverse the decline in these species.

The development proposal strikes at the heart of environmental and ecological values of the Tootgarook Swamp and risks all of these with its intensive development proposal which will see the entire development area on the wetland filled for mass house construction with majority of lots less than 449 square meters, directly adjacent an unstable and polluted former landfill area. The development is wishing to encroach within the 500-meter buffer zone of the former adjacent landfill in a similar way to the Brookfield Greens estate case<sup>2</sup> which saw the evacuation of surrounding homes.

All the while the owners defiantly refuse to remedy the outstanding illegal vegetation clearance undertaken from 2011, while they continue to seek approval to cause more intensive and damaging development works and subvert the consequences of their illegal actions. A precedent stemming from this will have severe implications to Victoria's native vegetation clearance laws, one which we believe will cause a large increase in illegal clearing. An outstanding question remains should we reward outstanding illegal clearance, by gifting developers planning permits proposals for non-retrospective illegal activities.

But most of all at the very core of all this that which must be decided once and for all;

Does Victorian law consider the values and benefits of our little remaining high quality environment areas to outweigh and stand above humans continuous need for development expansion? Especially where an outstanding enforcement order exists from 2011? Is there a point where we draw a line in sand and say no, here is where we stop as we put more and more pressure on the little remaining remnant areas of vegetation?

Standing in objection one way or another of the development with varying view points and expertise is;

Mornington Peninsula Shire, Melbourne Water, Nepean Conservation Group and Mornington Peninsula Rate Payers Association, Southern Peninsula Flora and Fauna Association, as well as other individuals, including a former planning officer of the Shire who dealt with the application, and ourselves Save Tootgarook Swamp. As a collective we will aim to impress on the sitting tribunal just how important the preservation and protection of this wetland really is and speak out strongly in defence of that which cannot fight for itself, our environment.

Over the last number of years it has been a priority area of the Mornington Peninsula Shire, who has already undertaken a feasibility study for Ramsar nomination of the wetland.

Though the Tootgarook Swamp and all its inhabitants will never be able to thank us for the support we offer, we as a group are proud to stand in defence of this unique and valuable wetland and will give all we can to see its preservation secured once and for all.

Press release photos; <https://onedrive.live.com/redir?resid=E8D6D95B3A28352D!306864&authkey=!ABPSjkOEOJfe5-8&ithint=folder%2c>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/Reports-Publications/Parliamentary-Reports/Brookland-Greens-Estate-Investigation-into-methane> Ombudsman Victoria Government



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Thank you and kind regards,

The Save Tootgarook Swamp Team



## SAVE TOOTGAROOK SWAMP

[www.savetootgarookswamp.org](http://www.savetootgarookswamp.org)

Are you a defender of biodiversity?