

Kim Samiotis

Candidate for Albert Park

MEDIA RELEASE
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Victorian Greens pledge support for improved facilities at Albert Park Lake

Albert Park district – Victorian Lower House candidate for Albert Park, Kim Samiotis, and The Victorian Greens have pledged \$5 million dollars in support of restoring and maintaining vital community facilities at Albert Park Lake.

Under the management of Parks Victoria, Albert Park Lake has suffered a long history of under-investment. Not only does the Australian Grand Prix disrupt the lives of local residents for several months every year, it dramatically affects the community by monopolising funding, leaving sporting facilities and the environment in disrepair.

Parks Victoria's own Albert Park Master Plan (2019) estimates population growth of more than 48% to around 170,000 by 2041 yet the Master Plan remains unfunded by the government and the neglect of the lake is increasingly impacting public use of the many facilities vital to community connection and health.

Albert Park is more than just a venue for the Grand Prix; it is the home to over 30 community sports clubs across 22 sports fields, 4 bowling rinks, 5 tennis courts, a golf course, a driving range, multiple indoor and outdoor courts, and water sports like sailing and rowing. In short, it is a vital community asset.

Apart from its intrinsic aesthetic, recreational and environmental value, the lake functions both as a sump for stormwater from the park and nearby suburbs and as a source of water for irrigation of the parklands and sports fields.

The lake wall is a core element of the infrastructure of Albert Park Reserve. A concrete edge wall constructed in the 1930s, its maintenance has long been neglected and it is in dire need of repair. Plans to rebuild the lake wall have only been partially completed since 2005 with the western side from the Grebe picnic area to Mud Island (approx. 1.3km) still awaiting repair. This unrestored section of the lake wall currently displays breaches for the majority of its length, risking possible collapse and limiting the lake to 70% of capacity. This risk directly affects the public use of the lake by impacting access for watersports and reducing the availability of water for irrigation.

While the Local Council and State Government have engaged in extension planning and report writing, neither body of Government has yet committed the necessary funding to upgrade facilities or maintain current infrastructure.

The Greens have committed \$5 million to ensure Albert Park remains a home for community sport, recreation and family leisure time available to all surrounding residents.

The funding will be spent on re-building this final western section of the lake wall, estimated by Parks Victoria to cost in the vicinity of \$5 million. When completed, the lake could hold up to 30% more water. Without it, there will be ongoing significant erosion, water loss and damage to assets resulting in loss of use by sporting clubs, community fragmentation due to clubs relocating out of the area and challenges to residents' satisfaction and health.

Proponents of the Albert Park Master Plan (2019) will note that the lake wall is completely omitted from future plans for park upgrades and the plan itself remains without commitment to funding by the state government with the plan itself stating, "*[it] does not represent a commitment to implement any or all recommendations, which will be staged over time and are subject to available funding and resources.*"

Quotes attributable to Victorian Greens Candidate for Albert Park, Kim Samiotis:

"Albert Park residents have long been taken for granted by Parks Victoria and the state government and this election is a chance for residents to find a voice that will take this fight to parliament for the community that depends on these facilities."

"With property prices among the highest in the state, residents pay a premium to live in our neighbourhoods yet the degrading facilities threaten to push our sports clubs out of the area and break the vital human connections fostered by community sports."

"The Greens recognise the imminent importance of protecting the Albert Park Lake Reserve for community good and ensuring the environment and local amenities are protected and maintained."

Quotes attributable to Hugo Armstrong, President of the Albert Park Sports Clubs Association:

"Albert Park Lake is a famous and much-loved landmark, used by thousands of local residents and sportspeople, as well as being a home to swans and other wildlife,"

"With this promise to complete the rebuilding of the lake wall after twenty years of ad hoc works, there's a real chance the Lake can become deeper, cleaner, safer, and better equipped to collect stormwater to help irrigate the rest of Albert Park Reserve. The local sporting community, both land- and water-based, is absolutely delighted that its long-term campaigning to get the wall repairs finished off has finally been taken up."

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