



The Victoria Naturally Alliance – a shared vision

## MEDIA RELEASE

May 8 - 2008

# Whittlesea Red Gum woodland must be protected

The Victoria Naturally Alliance has called on the State Government and Whittlesea Council to protect the McDonalds Road Red Gum woodland from future development.

Environment minister Gavin Jennings is expected at a South Morang workshop next week to discuss plans for protecting Victoria's threatened ecosystems as part of the State Government's Land and Biodiversity Green Paper, which is now open for public comment.

The Victoria Naturally Alliance is urging residents from Whittlesea and the northern suburbs to raise local environmental issues at the forum.

"Urban development is the biggest threat to native plants and animals hanging on for survival in small, remnant patches of bush on Melbourne's fringe," the alliance's Carrie Deutsch said.

"Endangered ecosystems and important wildlife habitats such as Whittlesea's magnificent Red Gum woodlands are on our doorstep in Melbourne, yet much of this is under threat."

Peter Roberts, who lives in Mill Park, is a passionate advocate for the protection of the few remaining patches of Red Gum woodlands left in the Whittlesea area.

"Regretfully, Westfield has already destroyed about 24 ancient Red Gums aged between 200 and 400 years old to make way for a shopping centre next to the McDonalds Road woodland," he said.

"But it can still protect the remaining woodland habitat and save this precious natural heritage for future generations to enjoy."

Andrew Booth, a native vegetation campaigner for Environment Victoria and the Victorian National Parks Association, which are both part of the Victoria Naturally Alliance, says some of the largest habitat trees in McDonalds Road woodland reserve are up to 400 years old.

"They provide important habitat for a diverse range of rare native birds and bats, possibly including threatened species such as the Barking Owl and Swift Parrot," he said.

"Rare native plants can be found in the woodlands' grassy ground cover, including a substantial population of the endangered Matted Flax-Lily.

"Part of the McDonalds Road woodland has already been cleared to build the shopping centre, but more than five hectares still remains intact and has recently been purchased by Westfield," Mr Booth said.

"Westfield is considering what to do with the site and one possibility is to protect all of it as an offset for the clearing it has already done while building the shopping centre.

"Securing the future of Melbourne's native vegetation when planning for new urban development should be an integral part of the State Government's Land and Biodiversity action plan," Mr Booth said.

"Government should also implement its policy of avoiding and minimising clearing when assessing applications for urban development and make sure the McDonalds Road woodland is not carved up by further development and road works," he said.

"The State Government and Whittlesea Council should continue to work with the developer to secure the future of McDonalds Road woodland in a viable reserve."

### For further comment please contact:

- Victoria Naturally Alliance project leader Carrie Deutsch on 0438 003 037.



The Victoria Naturally Alliance wants to see Victoria's native plants and animals protected from threats including climate change and habitat loss. For more information go to [www.victorianaturally.org.au](http://www.victorianaturally.org.au).