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VIC NEWS

Calls for Melbourne to become a national park plan for Melbourne

IAN ROYALL, Herald Sun

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MELBOURNE should bid to become only the world's second national park city, according to the man behind London's successful proposal to become the first.

Geographer Dan Raven-Ellison said urban habitats were as valid as rainforests and they provided an opportunity for citizens to play an active part in their city's



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“Melbourne has its parks and its gardens, so it would be an incredible candidate.

“And millions of people can contribute and make a real change.”

He will speak on Monday at the World Parks Congress at the MCG at a workshop hosted by the Committee for Melbourne.

London will formally become a national park city next May, following a campaign that had the backing of mayor Sadiq Khan.

National park city status acknowledges a city’s existing plants and wildlife as well as its commitment to improving green spaces.

“When you look at national parks around the world, they represent every major kind of habitat and landscape but not urban habitats,” Mr Raven-Ellison said. “Urban landscapes are not worth less than rainforests or deserts. They’re just very different.

“London is arguably the most biologically diverse place in the UK, with 15,000 species existing alongside humans.”

Melbourne already had a parks system, which made it a worthy candidate, he said, but the real action could happen at a grassroots level.

“It’s an opportunity to galvanise and inspire thousands of people to make cities radically more green, healthy, wild and get more people outdoors.”



 Satellite view of central Melbourne showing the city's green spaces. Picture: Google



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 Aerial view of Royal Botanic Gardens looking back to Melbourne city. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

The City of Melbourne has an urban forest strategy that aims to increase the inner-city's canopy cover from 22 per cent to 40 per cent by 2040.

A total of 70,000 trees are growing in the municipality but more than a quarter will die in the next decade due to age and heat stress.

Melbourne Lord Mayor Sally Capp said a national park city was a movement to improve metropolitan life through increasing green space and enjoying the great outdoors.

“In Melbourne we have a goal to expand our existing 459 hectares of world-class parks and gardens by 42 hectares,” she said. “The heart and lungs of a city, open spaces are vital to making Melbourne such a great place to live.”

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