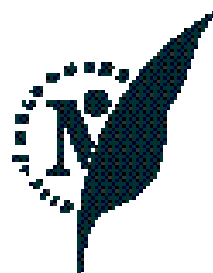


City of Melbourne

Parks Policy



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Parks Policy

Foreword

Each generation of Melburnians inherits the City's magnificent and varied network of public parks and gardens, which we can proudly claim to be among the best of any city in the world.

With this inheritance comes not only the opportunity to use and enjoy these great assets, but also a responsibility to protect and enhance them.

We are pleased to introduce the City of Melbourne's first Parks Policy, which is set out in this document and applies to more than 500 hectares of parkland managed by the City.

The Policy describes our vision for the City's parks and gardens, and establishes guidelines for their effective management. These guidelines have been developed following consultation with community groups and other stakeholders in our parklands.

Key aspects of the Policy include an assurance that there will be no net reduction in parkland area, and provision for continuing community involvement in the planning process. Importantly, the Policy aims to meet the needs and expectations of all those who make use of our parklands, while ensuring their quality and beauty are preserved for future generations.

The Policy is practical, succinct and contains specific actions to be put into practice. Overall, it is forward-looking and reflects the international significance of Melbourne's outstanding parks and gardens. Council being responsible for their management is committed to implementing the actions and making the most of the opportunities presented in this Parks Policy.

Ivan A Deveson.

Councillor Ivan A Deveson AO
Lord Mayor



The City's Vision for the Parks and Gardens

The location and size of Melbourne's green open space establishes the character of the City as one of spacious parks and gardens. The parks, together with boulevards of elm and plane trees and Hoddle's grid, are key defining elements of the City.

The City aims to protect and enhance its outstanding horticultural assets. The parks and gardens are of significance to the local community and are recognised nationally for their excellence.

For many, Melbourne is a city of exotic gardens from the Victorian era. Most parks and gardens, however, also contain significant native or indigenous elements. Royal Park is exclusively a native park. The historic character of the gardens will be conserved and the successful balance of exotic and native plantings across the City will be maintained.

The City of Melbourne will continue to provide world class leisure opportunities for residents and visitors to Melbourne while protecting our parks for future generations.

Background

Context

The City's parks and gardens are far from static and are managed and used within dynamic social, economic, political and natural environments.

By their very nature, parks and gardens are constantly evolving as the community's needs and expectations change and with the lifecycle of the park's natural elements. However, many retain historical and contemporary elements (built and botanical) which merit conservation, both as valuable assets of the park and/or by virtue of their own integrity.

Exciting opportunities exist to improve, expand and extend the park network and to further strengthen the quality and value of the parks to the community. Conversely threats to the parks are evident and include:

- demands to develop parkland for other uses (such as roads and car parks); and
- biological issues (such as an aging tree stock, disease and pests).

A complementary Sports Policy (outlining the role of sport in parks and sport's importance to the community) together with a Tree Policy (which outlines policy and procedure regarding tree management in parks, boulevards and streets) are also being developed.

The Parks

The City of Melbourne manages approximately 514 hectares of parkland, most as committee of management on behalf of the people of Victoria.

These green open space areas may be considered in two categories:

- major parks and gardens of National significance with a corresponding wide catchment of users; and
- local parks and squares usually defined by the urban form or street pattern and essentially locally used.

The major parks and gardens are Royal and Princes Parks, and the City's band of parks running from the Carlton Gardens through the Fitzroy and Treasury Gardens to Yarra Park, the Domain and Fawkner Park.

The remaining parks are less significant to metropolitan Melbourne but are important to local communities and to Melbourne's general environment and reputation as a Garden City.

Strategic Direction

Creating Prosperity, Victoria's Capital City Policy 1994 and its 1994-95 and 1995-96 reviews, set the strategic direction for the City and for the parks.

This Capital City document gives an undertaking to enhance and maintain the outstanding quality of Melbourne's parks and to develop an open space system of comparable quality on the western edge of the City with public access to the waterways. New approaches and major entries to the City will be developed as tree lined boulevards for which Melbourne is noted.

Creating Prosperity also recognises the international significance of what is now one of the largest surviving stands of mature elm trees remaining in the world and the need to phase out the use of parkland for car parking.







The City of Melbourne will ensure that:

1. *Melbourne's parkland areas will be maintained with no net reduction in area and new opportunities for parkland will be explored and developed where appropriate.*

Melbourne's founders provided the City with an expansive network of parks and gardens. The City's character is now defined by and its livability largely relies upon the maintenance of the open space network. To this end the Council is committed to ensuring that over time, there will be no loss of parkland, ie in the year 2002 there will be more not less parkland than in 1997.

There is however, a need to retain the flexibility to capitalise on opportunities to gain better collective park assets. To this end a loss of parkland may be entertained in an area provided that: (a) parkland of similar size and quality can be acquired in the same area; and (b) the outcome is a better quality collective park asset.

The redevelopment of the Docklands precinct, various other sites within the City including Federation Square and the adjoining parkland present opportunities to develop additional parkland. Council will secure new public open space where appropriate for the people of Melbourne. These new parks will be in addition to any new parkland acquired as compensation for losses in other areas of the City.

Actions

- Establish a register of parkland (net hectares per park) to monitor changes and ensure any loss of open space is compensated by the recovery or purchase of other open space.
- Report to Council and publish in the Annual Report:
 - identified new opportunities for parkland; and
 - hectares of parkland under the categories of: Major Parks and Gardens; Local Parks; and other open space.
- Review the developer contribution (in lieu of open space provision) currently waived as part of the Postcode 3000 program.

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2. *A lead advocacy role is taken in park management.*

The City will take a lead advocacy role (Australia wide) in the planning of parks in consultation with stakeholders and the community, customer service and in the provision of services performed under contract.

Actions

- Ensure that Council's practices are leading edge by actively participating in benchmarking programs to identify and adopt best practice park management.
- Take a lead role in professional organisations such as the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation.
- Convene appropriate forums on current issues in parks management.

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3. *Parks and gardens will be managed to excellent standards.*

Daily maintenance of the parks and gardens is managed under contract. Council has set quality targets and monitors the performance of the contractors across all the parks on a regular basis. Quality standards are based on best practice and targets designed to encourage continuous improvement. Council has and continues to identify benchmarking partners against which to gauge performance.

Actions

- Ensure that appropriate quality standards are imbedded in all parks and gardens' contracts.
- Monitor contractors' performance, as an integral part of the management of parks and gardens' contracts.
- Make publicly accessible and promote the contract specifications and Quality Assurance systems used to manage parks and gardens and seek public input into reviews of such systems and specifications.

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4. *The planning of the parks and gardens will acknowledge Council's capital city role, taking into account the national significance of the City's parks and the needs of local users.*

Council manages many parks and reserves of national significance on behalf of all Victorians. Park Plans will be developed for all parks and gardens and will seek to find the balance between the provision of facilities for local users and the needs of the wider community. Park Plans will address discrete areas as part of the wider city and metropolitan parks network.

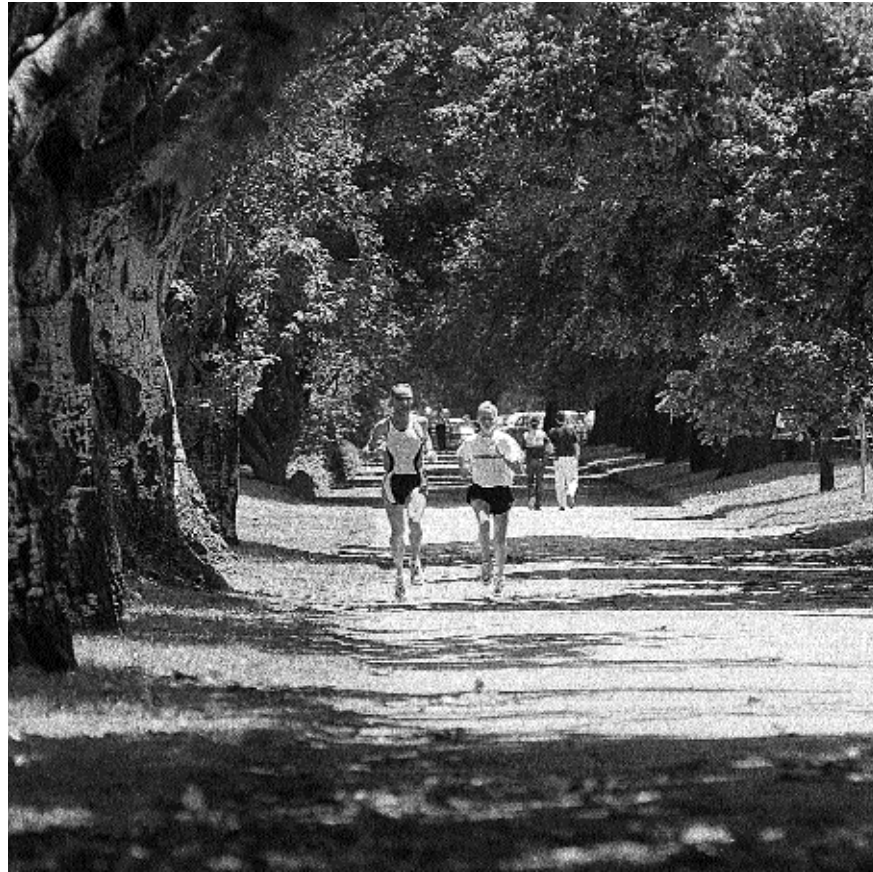
Actions

- Prepare Park Plans for all parks to guide their development and management and review them every 7 to 10 years.
- Ensure that planning in the parks and gardens takes account of the needs of special interest groups, such as the disabled.









5. *The broad community will be consulted regarding matters of significance to parks.*

A variety of strategic planning documents are being developed for the parks and gardens. They include Park Plans, which will establish a vision for each of the parks in the future, and policies, which provide a decision making framework for management.

The broader community will be consulted in the planning of parks. All stakeholders will be given the opportunity to contribute to major decisions about the future of the parks as part of the planning process. Stakeholders will also be informed prior to major projects commencing.

Actions

- Consult widely as part of the development of Park Plans and significant capital works projects.
- Undertake market research to access the broader community.
- Provide information to stakeholders prior to major projects commencing.
- Identify the resources required for consultation and incorporate them into planning and project budgets.

6. *Adequate resources will be provided for an ongoing asset replacement program.*

The park planning program is necessarily a long term process which draws upon information held in the asset management system to identify and prioritise capital investment required in the parks. Many assets are degraded and need substantial investment for their replacement.

The construction of new and/or the redevelopment of existing facilities and infrastructure will be adequately resourced on an ongoing basis.

Actions

- Develop and implement a comprehensive asset management system.
- Complete an assessment of the capital requirements of parks infrastructure and report annually to Council.
- Distinguish capital works projects in budget allocations as either (a) replacement or (b) new facilities.

7. *The overall park network will be developed to provide excellent facilities for residents, city workers and visitors including the provision of recreation and leisure opportunities.*

Melbourne's parks and gardens are valuable resources both as community amenities and for the facilities that they provide. The landscape, tourism, sport and recreation potential of the parks and gardens shall be optimised, consistent with appropriate conservation planning.

Actions

- Improve facilities (kiosks, visitor information and hire facilities) for visitors, to enhance users' experience of the parks.
- Implement the City's Toilet Strategy as it applies to the parks and gardens.
- Provide barbecues, seats, shade and play equipment at appropriate locations.

8. *Facilities and services will be provided to enhance the visitor's experience of the park.*

Park Plans establish character attributes and themes and make decisions regarding appropriate activities and uses within each of the parks and gardens. Facilities and services, which support such use or events may be financed or provided in a number of ways (ie. directly by Council, by the community and clubs or commercially by the private sector).

Parks are primarily for public use. Any commercial activity within parks must enhance the experience of park users.

Actions

- Facilitate events where it is consistent with the recreation and leisure role of the parks.
- Recover costs of event management and seek to generate revenue for park management from commercial activity where appropriate.



9. *No permanent advertising shall be displayed in the parks and gardens.*

Permanent advertising shall not be permitted within the parks and gardens nor on the external surfaces of facilities located within the parks.

Sporting and commercial facilities within parks rely on advertising and sponsorship for their financial viability. Such advertising shall be directed to audiences within the facility and will not be clearly visible from the rest of the park.

Temporary advertising may however, be displayed within the park where it is associated with an upcoming event to be held within a park.

Actions

- Develop guidelines detailing acceptable advertising within parks.

10. *Park management practice will be environmentally sensitive.*

One of Council's primary roles in the management of parks is as custodian for future generations. Implicit in this role is responsible environmental management. The parks consume large quantities of water, require significant chemical use and generate large quantities of waste. Council will work towards best practice environmental management including the investigation of alternatives to the use of chemicals and waste minimisation and recycling.

The current diversity of flora will be maintained and where appropriate, habitats enhanced for birds and other fauna. To increase diversity and create enticing features, wetlands will be developed where feasible.

Actions

- Incorporate the Park's waste management policy into park contracts and the management of major events.
- Incorporate the Park's chemical use policy into park contracts.
- Continue to support research into biological pests and threats to the parks.
- Investigate water consumption in the parks and develop strategies to minimise waste.
- Identify energy consumption in the parks and address where appropriate as part of the implementation of the Parks' Lighting Strategy.

11. *Parks will be accessible to all groups in the community.*

Development in the parks will aim to improve access to all members of the community by providing safe environments and by including provisions for disabled park users. Traffic (including motorised vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, joggers, roller bladers and others) will be managed equitably and separated where necessary, to minimise conflict.

Actions

- Implement *A City for Everyone* – action plan for people with disabilities, 1997 as it applies to parks.
- Secure a budgetary commitment and develop an implementation plan for the:
 - Parks' Signage Strategy;
 - Parks' Lighting Strategy.

12. *Car parking on parkland will be reduced as alternatives become available.*

Many of the City's parks provide access to major crowd attracting venues. These venues are important for Melbourne's vitality and are consistent with the leisure and recreation role of parks. Council recognises the need to maintain and improve access to such facilities.

Access for visitors currently requires large car parking areas within parks, thereby reducing the land available for recreation (the primary purpose of the land). Poor management of vehicle's use may also threaten the long term survival of many park trees. The use of parkland for car parking will be gradually reduced through the provision of alternative parking facilities.

Actions

- Use of on street parking / park roads will be optimised to cope with parking demand generated by park users.
- Review the fees charged for parking in parks to ensure that the prices charged do not discourage the use of other modes of transport.
- Develop an implementation plan for the Universities Ward Parking Strategy.
- Develop car parking management plans for major constructed parking areas.
- Work with event managers and the Public Transport Corporation to encourage the use of public transport.







