

AUSTRALASIAN

parks

& leisure

Volume 28.1 Autumn 2025
ISSN: 1446-5604

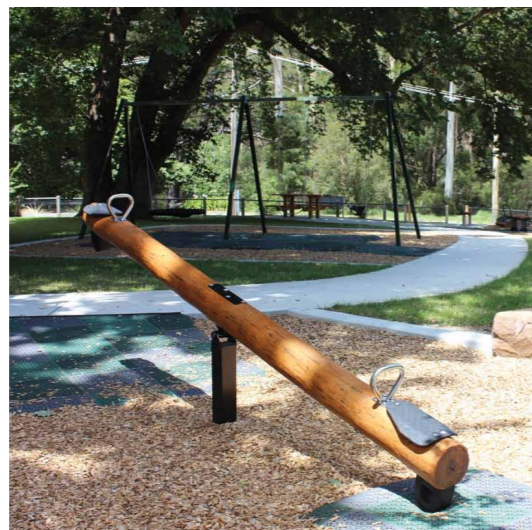
Community & Urban Planning

RECREATION IS
A Social Investment

THE NEXT GENERATION
OF WOMEN LEADERS IN SPORT

DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY
IN URBAN GREENSPACES

POpTED Play Opportunities
Through Environmental Design



- Premium Australian Steel
- Ethically sourced Natural Australian timber
- Unique Australian Native design
- Strong & Durable
- Customise to suit your requirements & budget



Follow us on:

CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 7 Vale: Graham Davis
- 8 Krefft's Gliders
- 10 The Next Generation of Women Leaders in Sport
- 12 More Than Golf: Driving Sustainability in Urban Spaces
- 14 POpTED
- 16 Specialist Hoops: No One Gets Left Behind
- 19 Failing to Maintain Tree Cover
- 21 Consultative, Considered and Unapologetic
- 23 Recreation is a Social Investment
- 24 A Greener Future for Sports and Recreation in Aotearoa
- 27 Designing for Growth
- 28 Bradbury Park Spaces
- 30 Sustainable Sports Field Design in New Zealand
- 31 A Dose of Nature

33 Leisure Planning: Beyond Systematic Adhocracy

INTERNATIONAL

- 36 Designed to Disappear
- 38 Nature-based Neighbourhoods in the UK
- 40 Guidelines to Help Make Schools Run Happier, Healthier and Greener

REGULARS

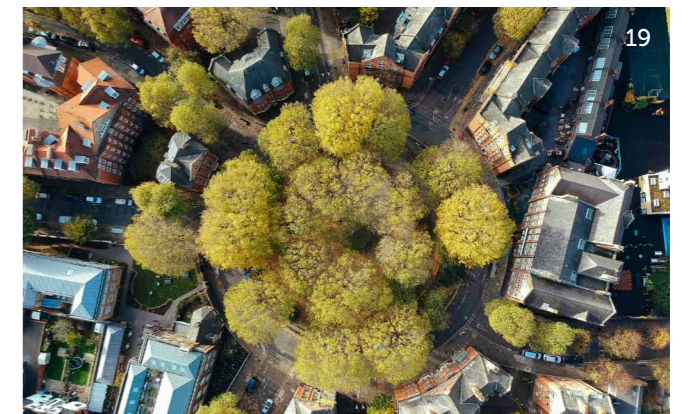
- 4 From the Editorial Desk / PLA President
- 6 From the Recreation Aotearoa Co-Chairs / CEO
- 41 Research Connections
- 44 PLA Advisory
- 45 Courses & Events
- 45 Book Review
- 46 Join Us on Social Media



33



31



19

AUSTRALASIAN parks & leisure

PRODUCTION EDITOR
Nicole Mulloy
nmulloy@umco.com.au

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR
John Senior
journal@parksleisure.com.au

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Taylah Britt

DESIGNER
Samantha Stewart

SALES/ACCOUNT MANAGERS
Antonia Bewley (NSW, QLD & WA)
0418 424 410

UNIVERSAL MEDIACO

CHAIRMAN/CEO
Prema Perera

PUBLISHER
Janice Williams

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Vicky Mahadeva

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Emma Perera

CIRCULATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
Mark McTaggart



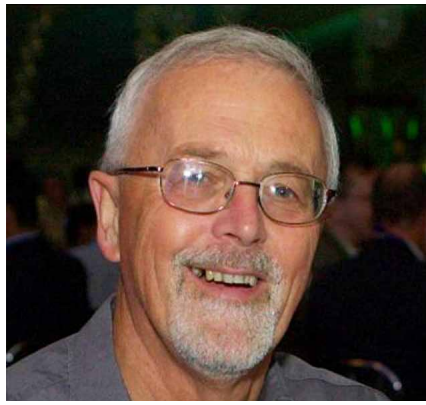
COVER IMAGE
Stock image by Jim Ouk, Unsplash

Circulation enquiries to our Sydney head office 02 9805 0399
PLA Journal is published by Universal Magazines, Unit 5, 6-8 Byfield Street, North Ryde 2113, Phone (02) 9805 0399, Fax (02) 9805 0714, Melbourne office, Suite 4 Level 1, 150 Albert Road, South Melbourne 3205 Phone (03) 9694 6444, Fax (03) 9699 7890. Printed by KHL Printing Co Pte Ltd, Singapore. This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be addressed to the publishers. The publishers believe all the information supplied in this book to be correct at the time of printing. They are not, however, in a position to make a guarantee to this effect and accept no liability in the event of any information proving inaccurate. Prices, addresses and phone numbers were, after investigation, and to the best of our knowledge and belief, up to date at the time of printing, but the shifting sands of time may change them in some cases. It is not possible for the publishers to ensure that advertisements which appear in this publication comply with the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth) and the Australian Law. The responsibility must therefore be on the person, company or advertising agency submitting the advertisements for publication. While every endeavour has been made to ensure complete accuracy, the publishers cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions. This magazine is printed on paper produced in a mill that meets Environmental Management System ISO14001

* Recommended retail price
ISSN 1446-5604

Copyright © Universal Magazines MMXXV
ACN 083 489 463
umco.com.au

Please pass on or recycle this magazine.



JOHN SENIOR

A very happy (if belated) New Year to our readers. I trust you will continue to enjoy the journal's offerings, which provide perspective, innovation, learning and interest. I encourage you to

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

consider submitting articles for future editions. Submissions can be sent to me via jgsenior@bigpond.com. The first edition of 2025 is packed with a topics that cover the diverse interests of our readers. It contains two articles on women's roles and needs in leadership and facilities. There is a very personal initiative on special needs participants in sports, alongside a much broader piece on NSW open space programs and leisure planning, as well as complex regional growth planning, plus a research contribution that puts a dollar value on the health benefits of visits to national parks. You will find a major feature on two PLA award-winning entries; namely Bradbury Park Playspace and, on making golf courses more environmentally sustainable, the winner for

Environmental Stewardship. At a local level, we feature the increasing population of sugar gliders in suburban Melbourne, which contrasts with a concerning report on the impact of failing to maintain tree cover in Melbourne and Sydney. From overseas, you can learn about the revitalisation of New York's Central Park, while news from England addresses guidelines to making school transport runs happier, healthier and greener, as well as a new national nature-based neighbourhood policy.

John Senior
Editorial Coordinator



KRISTIN DAVIES

As the seasons change and winter starts to set in, I am reminded that in nature, as in leadership, transformation is constant. The parks and leisure industry is more than just facilities, places, spaces and programs. It is the heart of what we do, the pulse of our wellbeing, and the foundation for stronger, more connected communities. But, for this industry to thrive, we must invest in its future; its young professionals, its emerging leaders, and those who will carry the torch long after we are gone. I want to put the spotlight on legacy leadership. If we want to create a legacy that lasts, we cannot afford to stand still. We must be intentional about lifting others as we climb, about breaking down the barriers that hold people back, and about ensuring that the pathways to leadership are not just open but actively welcoming to all. Leadership is not about titles or tenure, it is about impact, about having the courage to change the narrative and build something greater than ourselves.

FROM THE PLA PRESIDENT

Our industry is at a turning point. The challenges we face, from climate resilience to urban growth, from digital transformation to equitable access, demand fresh perspectives and bold ideas. And let's be honest: innovation does not come from doing things the way they have always been done. It comes from making room at the table for new voices, for diverse perspectives, and for those who dare to think differently. That is why I am calling on every single one of us to be intentional about mentoring, championing and advocating for the next generation of leaders in parks and leisure. If you are an industry veteran, expert in your field or a seasoned people leader, ask yourself, who are you mentoring? Who are you lifting up? Who are you advocating for when they are not in the room? Because true leadership is not just about where you go, it is about who you bring with you. To our emerging leaders, I see you. I see your passion, your drive and your commitment to making a difference. I know that sometimes it feels like the barriers are too high, that the doors are too heavy to push open and pathways are unclear. But I also know that you are exactly what this industry needs. We need your energy. We need your ideas. We need your courage to challenge the status quo. Do not wait for permission to lead, step up, speak out and take your place at the table. The Generate Network is Parks and Leisure Australia's commitment to young professionals and emerging leaders across Australia and New Zealand. It connects the next generation of leaders to the industry, to opportunities and

to each other. We are here to support you in your leadership and development journey. See the PLA website for more information on how to get involved. It is up to all of us to create the conditions where leadership is not defined by years of experience but by vision, by action, and by a willingness to serve and grow. This means breaking down the glass ceilings that still exist in our industry. It means ensuring that leadership pathways are open to young people, women, to First Nations people, to those from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and to everyone who brings a new perspective to the conversation. Because when leadership is truly diverse, our industry is stronger, our communities are richer, and our impact is greater. Let this be the season where we commit — not just in words but in actions — to building a more inclusive, forward-thinking and resilient industry. Let's be the generation that does not just talk about change but makes it happen. And let's remember that leadership is not about where we sit, it is about the legacy we leave behind. Legacy leadership starts with us — let's invest, inspire and lead the way forward.

Kristin Davies,
National President, Parks & Leisure Australia



Australian Made Play, Fitness & Recreation spaces.



- Playground Equipment
- Outdoor Fitness Equipment
- Street Furniture and Shade
- Family-owned Australian business
- Comprehensive Design, Manufacturing and Installation services
- Australian Made
- Manufactured in Regional Queensland
- Commitment to Quality, Safety, and Environmental Responsibility
- Premium materials such as Aluminium, Stainless Steel, and UV Stable HDPE

Our team brings extensive industry experience to deliver complete "turn-key" solutions for recreational spaces of all shapes and sizes. We dedicate ourselves to delivering spaces that are not only innovative and safe, but also perfectly aligned with our clients' visions.

Contact us today to transform your playground visions into reality.

We thank our national sponsors and partners:  





FROM THE RECREATION AOTEAROA CO-CHAIRS

BOBBY CLARK-HEU & KIRSTY KNOWLES

Peoroakitia ngā ringa mahana o Hineraumati. Nau mai ngā rau e horohoro nei i te tino ngahuru. Kei ngā maata waka o te motu Tēnā koutou katoa. (As we bid farewell to the warmth of Hineraumati, the summer maiden, we welcome the trembling leaves of autumn. To all members and communities of our land, greetings to you all.)

As the whakatauki (proverb) says, ka mua, ka muri (look to the past to inform the future). The Recreation Aotearoa Board did just this when we joined our Māori Navigation Group, Te Kāhui Kura Māori at Umupuia Marae in November. Together, we reflected on progress since adopting our strategic plan, Te Whai Oranga five years ago, and planned for the future.

A key goal of Te Whai Oranga is to shift the narrative around recreation in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Member feedback strongly supports our direction. Over the next few months, we will review and refresh Te Whai Oranga, building on gains made and advancing our vision of transformational change.

In November, many members joined us for the annual recreation conference and our AGM. With board elections and constitutional amendments on the agenda, members made significant decisions. We're delighted to share that the recommendations from the Mahi Ngātahi Governance Review were supported and all proposed constitutional changes approved. This milestone aligns our governance structure with the strategic aspirations of Te Whai Oranga.

Three board member positions were up for grabs at our AGM. After a hotly contested election, longstanding Recreation Aotearoa members Kiri Pope and Antoinette Campbell were elected, while Kirsty Knowles was re-elected for a second term. We look

forward to working alongside Antoinette and Kiri. We'd like to extend huge thanks to departing board members Michele Frey and Vanessa Hughey-Pol for their service. Congratulations to another long-standing member, Chris Rutherford who was awarded Life Membership. Chris has made a massive contribution to both Recreation Aotearoa and the wider industry over many years. We're proud to recognise this with Life Membership status.

As the cooler months approach, we hope your busy summer season was a success and the rest of the year is shaping up well. With the Recreation Aotearoa conference and event season nearing, we look forward to connecting kano ki te kano (face to face) with members and partners across the motu (country) and continuing to support you as your industry body.

Bobby Clark-Heu & Kirsty Knowles
Co-Chairs, Recreation Aotearoa



VALE GRAHAM DAVIS

THE ADVANCED TREE GROWING INDUSTRY HAS LOST ONE OF ITS GREATEST ACHIEVERS WITH THE PASSING OF GRAHAM DAVIS

Graham was a great supporter and sponsor of Parks & Leisure Australia. Through his company Established Tree Planters (ETT), he assisted PLA members in "buying time" as they created new parks and avenues of advanced trees in all Australian states and territories.

Specialising in the production of selected species suitable for street tree planting, ETT was responsible for the reimagining of suburban streetscapes. Graham's legacy is the wonderful mature tree plantings you find in significant areas of Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane, Bendigo, Ballarat, Adelaide and many other cities across the Nation.

Graham was a master at relocating mature trees. You would often find him up to his knees in mud, pruning tree roots then wrapping hessian around huge root balls before cranes lifted them onto low loader trucks for travel to the new sites. His work was significant.

One example of Graham's many different tree relocation projects was the repositioning and replanting of a mature Plane tree growing very close to the race line on a corner of the Adelaide Grand Prix Circuit — which many race cars had collided with in previous years.

Graham's love of horticulture developed during a holiday to the United Kingdom in the 1960s. In 1964, Graham spent time working at a nursery in England. This led to he and wife Judith beginning what would become Established Tree Transplanters (ETT) in Australia in 1972.

By 1975, Graham had leased two acres (0.8ha) at Monbulk to start growing advanced size trees. Over the next three decades, ETT underwent significant expansion across Victoria and Australia. The nurseries expanded throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s, with new nurseries at Wandin, Gembrook,

Hoddles Creek and Echuca added to meet the growing demand for advanced trees that was created by a boom in housing development projects.

ETT has developed into a very large grower of in-ground and containerised ornamental, deciduous and evergreen semi-mature trees. Graham and Judith's sons, Matthew and Stephen, now oversee the business.

On behalf of PLA Board and members, we extend our condolences to Graham's sons Matthew, Stephen and Robert, his extended family, friends and colleagues. ■



SARAH MURRAY

Great parks and public spaces don't happen by chance. They happen through good planning and smart design. Parks and recreation professionals lead the way in creating and activating spaces that bring people joy and improve community wellbeing. Often, this means advocating for recreation and play to be factored into projects and ensuring environmental sustainability is a key driver. These topics are explored in the Autumn edition of the Australasian Parks and Leisure Journal, showcasing best practice across Aotearoa and Australia.

In late 2024, the New Zealand Department of Conservation proposed overhauling conservation land management, including streamlining and simplifying planning and concession processes. They are also

FROM THE RECREATION AOTEAROA CEO

testing public opinion on access charges for popular sites — a significant shift from current legislation that enshrines free access to all public conservation lands and waters. Recreation Aotearoa has long advocated for changes to New Zealand's piecemeal and outdated conservation laws. We'll engage closely in this process to ensure the recreation sector's views and aspirations are heard.

Over the last six months, we've worked with our national partner, Xyst to deliver parks management master classes across the country. Member response has been overwhelming, highlighting the importance of parks planning and ongoing professional development. A huge thanks to the team at Xyst for leading this initiative, and to the Recreation Aotearoa Regional Committees for getting behind it. We're excited to share these workshops will continue in 2025, focusing on cemetery operations and planning.

As we crank into 2025, the Recreation Aotearoa team is moving full steam ahead with our suite of conferences, programmes and events. After a busy summer of Poolsafe® visits, preparations are well underway for this year's Green Pavlova conference in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). This year, Green Pavlova will be held alongside the

biennial New Zealand Cemeteries and Crematoria Conference. Following closely will be Waves in Ōtautahi (Christchurch). We're excited to check out the long-awaited Parakiore Recreation and Sports Centre, set to open later this year. And, as part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we have been taking time to reimagine our annual Recreation Conference. Stay tuned for updates!

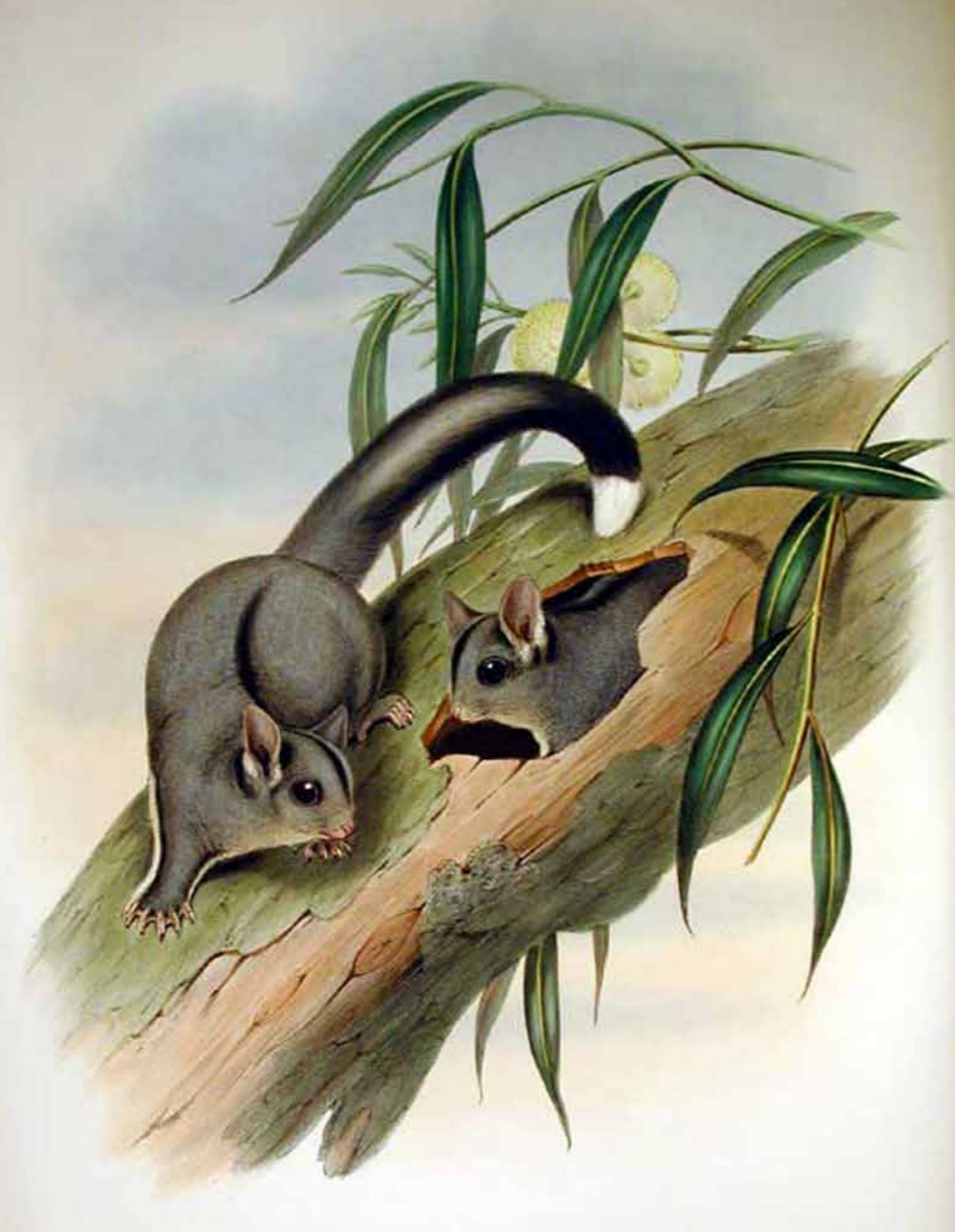
Earlier this year I had the pleasure of connecting with PLA's new CEO, Anand Pillay. Recreation Aotearoa and PLA share many common goals, and collaborating on key initiatives, like this journal, help to strengthen Trans-Tasman connections. I look forward to working with Anand to continue our long-standing partnership.

In closing, I'd like to extend a huge thanks to our members, partners and supporters for all you do to create great places for people to recreate. Our industry plays a critical role in improving the wellbeing of New Zealanders. Thanks for being part of Recreation Aotearoa and sharing in our mission of enhancing wellbeing through recreation.

Sarah Murray
Recreation Aotearoa, Chief Executive



Graham Davis (Centre) with sons, Stephen (L) and Matthew (R)



KREFFT'S GLIDERS

THE HIGHFLYERS OF UPPER MERRI

WORDS MERRI CREEK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Krefft's Glider (previously known as the Sugar Glider), one of Australia's most endearing nocturnal marsupials, is a master of the night. With large eyes and thick grey fur, these tiny mammals can glide distances of 50 metres or more, spreading their limbs to expose soft membranes (known as patagia) and traversing from tree to tree under the cover of darkness.

Thanks to its remarkable soaring ability, the Krefft's Glider rarely descends to the forest floor. Living in small social groups, they nest in tree hollows lined with fresh gum leaves — a characteristic marker of their presence.

"Krefft's Gliders have unique nests that you would never confuse with

the nest of another creature," explains Chris Cobern, Upper Merri Landcare Coordinator. "They're always very clean and lined with fresh gum leaves — but no feathers or bits of bark. It's very interesting because they're quite long-lived mammals, and they have very nice, neat, hygienic nests. For some of the other animals, like Phascogales, which don't live as long, hygiene isn't a priority. They have very messy nests full of their droppings (scat) and all sorts of materials."

Krefft's Gliders are relatively common and are known to dwell in the northern end of the Merri Creek catchment. But for all their homemaking instincts, they face a significant challenge: the loss of mature, hollow-bearing trees

that are crucial to their shelter and, therefore, their survival. In response to this dilemma, Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) is supporting the formation and work of new groups, such as the Upper Plenty Merri Catchment Landcare Group, to create new habitat opportunities in the area.

While MCMC has historically focused much of its work on the inner-northern catchment, the Upper Merri and Upper Plenty offer unique opportunities to protect biodiversity in areas that still include some remnant habitat.

Planting and revegetation efforts will eventually provide the necessary habitat for Krefft's Gliders, as well as other wildlife like treecreepers, nightjars, parrots and possums. However, these newly planted trees may take decades to mature. In the meantime, nest boxes are filling the gap.

In May 2024, the Upper Plenty Merri Catchment Landcare Group launched a project to install nesting boxes at Dry Creek Reserve. With donated timber and detailed design instructions specifying box and entrance dimensions for a range of species, an enthusiastic group of Landcare volunteers turned out to build the boxes.

"The establishment of our Landcare group, which is still quite new, was spearheaded by MCMC and our local Shire, with additional support from local environment groups," says Michael Watson, Secretary of the Upper Plenty Merri Catchment Landcare Group.

"MCMC (and Chris Cobern in particular), has been invaluable in helping us to get established and achieve our goals. Chris helped us plan the nest box installations and organised a nest box building activity for the group, which was very well attended. We had a wide range of people come along, including families and couples, and we built more boxes than we actually needed for the Dry Creek project, so everyone got to take one home as well. It was a real community effort."

With the nest boxes now in place, Chris will undertake annual monitoring to track their success. Each one is GPS-marked and documented to ensure easy follow-up. "We have a special camera we use to check the boxes without disturbing the animals," Chris explains.

"Krefft's Gliders actually have a few nesting sites within their home range and don't use the same nest every night. Sometimes you'll see evidence

that they've been there. Other times you'll see the gliders themselves. Once, on a different site, I checked a box and found eight Krefft's Gliders all tucked up in one box. There were a few young ones in there all cuddled up together."

The nest box project does more than just provide homes for native wildlife; it plays a crucial role in rebalancing the local ecosystem. Krefft's Gliders are known to pollinate native plants and help balance factors such as mistletoe, a parasitic plant that can operate within an unbalanced system to overwhelm trees in the absence of natural checks. "By having Krefft's Gliders and other possums in the area feeding on the mistletoe foliage, fruit and flowers, we're helping to maintain a balance," said Chris.

"In areas without natural hollows, these animals can't live there, and mistletoe can become too plentiful, especially in agricultural settings. Nest boxes help bring that balance back."

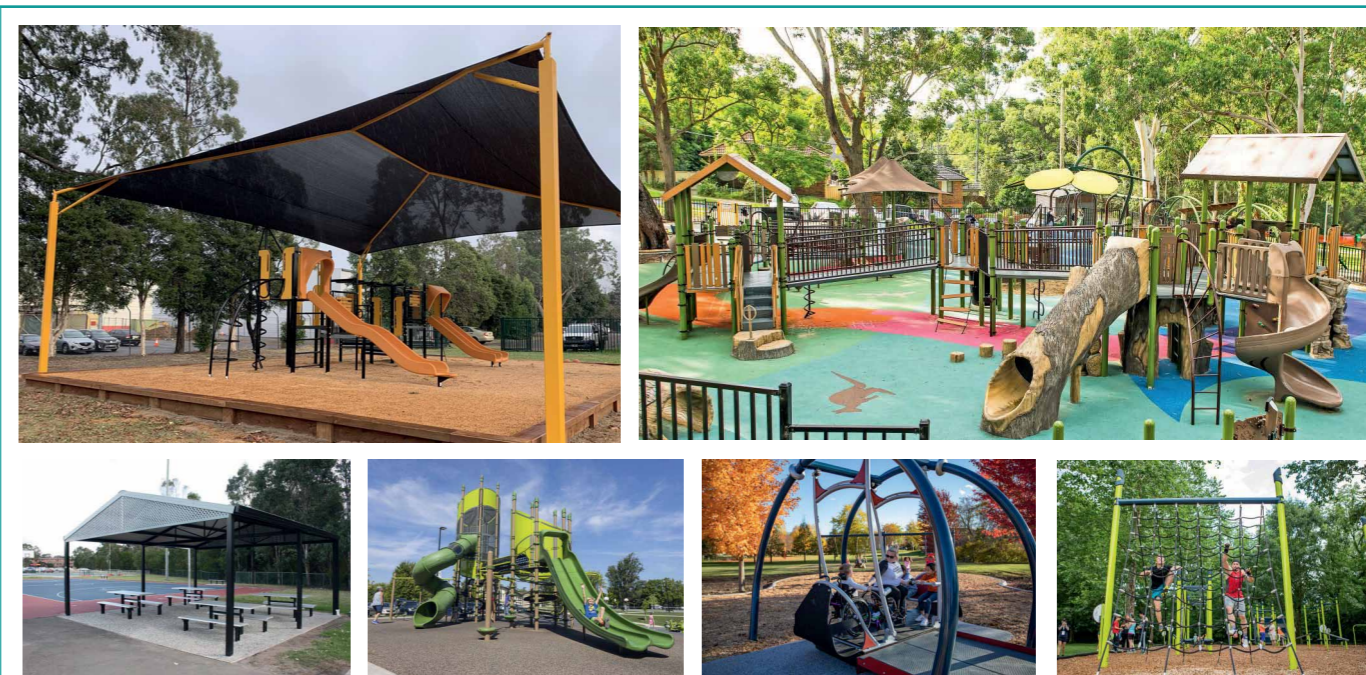
Since its inception in late 2022, the Upper Plenty Merri Catchment Landcare Group has grown steadily, tackling a range of projects to improve habitat quality and increase biodiversity. Their efforts have included revegetation projects and



weed management, with a focus on engaging a broad demographic.

"Our community response has been fantastic, and that momentum is still building," says Michael. "As our membership and our interests expand, we look forward to more projects on the Merri Creek.

"People may not always have time for committee roles, but they're eager to volunteer for planting days or special events like the nest box workshop. It's rewarding work, great fun, and it contributes to improved environmental outcomes," he adds. ■



Let our team from Parkequip create an exciting outdoor space for you!

PARKEQUIP
park & play solutions

Follow us on:



02 9725 5604



info@parkequip.com.au

www.parkequip.com.au

THE NEXT GENERATION

WOMEN IN SPORT AND RECREATION IS PAVING THE WAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN LEADERS IN SPORT



WORDS SARAH STYLES, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF WOMEN IN SPORT AND RECREATION

The Office of Women in Sport and Recreation (OWSR) is thrilled to announce 111 recipients have been named for the 2024-25 Change Our Game Professional Development Scholarships Program.

The Program supports more opportunities for women as leaders in the sport and active recreation sector by enhancing their skillset through access to a range of professional development opportunities, placing them in the best position to obtain and thrive in leadership roles.

Since 2018, more than 600 professional development opportunities for women have been supported through Change Our Game programs. Previous recipients have undertaken a variety of professional development ranging from effective business writing to risk management, learning to present with influence and enhancing communication, as well as culture and Indigenous perspectives in business.

It is important having women in leadership positions within sport. By increasing the representation of women in leadership roles, not only does the sector benefit from their incredible skill and insight, we are also creating a more inclusive sporting environment that fosters innovation and growth.

This year the program provided six streams, including two new categories: Women with a Disability and Community Leaders. The streams cater for women in different stages of their careers across community and elite sport, from those in the early stages of their career to those returning from parental leave,

executives, new or aspiring board members, and community leaders.

The six streams now comprise:

- Learning
- Next Generation Leaders
- Women with a Disability
- Executive
- Governance
- Community Leaders

Recipients will get access to professional development opportunities ranging from governance training and executive coaches to courses to build specialist skills and confidence that will advance their careers in sport and recreation.

Head of Player Relations at Professional Footballers Australia, Erin Clout, is just one of the 111 recipients selected. Erin will undertake the Foundations of Directorship course delivered by the Australian Institute of Company Directors as part of the Governance stream of the program. The program will support her to build her governance knowledge and capability, and advance her aspirations to become a board director in the sport and recreation sector.

SPECIAL MILESTONE

We are also beyond excited to share a special milestone with you. OWSR can announce that fair access for women and girls in community sport is one step closer, with 100 percent of local councils across Victoria having adopted a Gender Equitable Access and Use Policy, in line with the Fair Access Policy Roadmap.

From Mallacoota to Mildura, Echuca to Elsternwick, Warrambool

to Wodonga, and everywhere in between, locally relevant policies are now in place statewide to help level the playing field for women and girls in community sport for generations to come, each tailored to local community needs, opportunities and challenges.

Beyond this impact on sport in our local communities, we also know that community sport is a powerful driver for social change, challenging outdated stereotypes, creating lifelong skills and confidence, and empowering women and girls to shape their futures.

We are proud to play a part in helping to achieve a level playing field for women and girls in community sport. This has been years in the making, through the Fair Access Policy Roadmap. Thank you to each and every individual who has been a part of the Fair Access journey, whether you are within a council, a state sporting association, a regional sports assembly or a community club.

Thank you as well to OWSR's partners, VicHealth and Sport and Recreation Victoria, for helping to create this Australian-first to fundamentally dismantle the barriers faced by women and girls in the place where we all start: in community sport. Together, we are all creating a future where everyone has equal access to sport.

As Director of OWSR, I'm proud of the passion and leadership we see here in Victoria to ensure women and girls are only influenced by their own choices when it comes to sport and active recreation, and look forward to continuing to create that world with you moving forward. ■



Earthlife
Soil Balance

MICROBIAL ROCK MINERAL

SOIL CONDITIONERS & FERTILISERS

THE NEW BEST PRACTICE

- Replaces gypsum, lime and dolomite
- Reduces watering, spraying and wear and tear
- Improve soil structure, plant establishment and plant health
- Recommended for all soils, safe for all plants and turf
- Used by professional landscapers, councils, turf farms, wholesale growers and industry experts

**LESS EFFORT
BETTER RESULTS
MORE PROFIT**

"We have found that our gardens require less water, and the plants take up the natural nutrients in the soil much quicker, giving us better colour and foliage in all our plants. We strongly recommend using EarthLife products as Best Practice in all our projects, and highly recommend adding it to your next landscaping project list."

Jason Kay, owner of iLandscape

1800 819 003

earthlife.com.au



ABC Gardening Australia. Image Ben Blaess



Naturalised rough. Image Kate Torgersen

MORE THAN GOLF

DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY IN URBAN GREENSPACES

WORDS KATE TORGERSEN AND MONINA GILBEY, TORGERSEN GILBEY

Traditionally perceived as environmentally damaging, golf courses are undergoing a significant green transformation. Once criticised for excessive water use and habitat destruction, the industry is now actively embracing sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Many courses are pioneering innovative practices, transitioning from manicured landscapes to ecologically diverse environments. By restoring indigenous vegetation and creating wildlife habitats, they are contributing significantly to urban biodiversity.

Research from leading Australian universities confirms that golf courses can serve as valuable ecological refuges, supporting a wider range of species than surrounding residential areas and parks.

The closure and downsizing of golf courses, especially public courses, is driven by the misconception that golf is an exclusive activity that squanders valuable land. This perception undermines efforts underway around Australia to make golf more sustainable and accessible to a wide range of players of all abilities. Often argued that closed golf courses could be repurposed as valuable community spaces, these land holdings frequently become overgrown or are developed into housing, failing to realise their potential for public benefit and urban biodiversity.

Golf courses have taken proactive steps to become more environmentally

responsible by implementing advanced water management techniques, reducing chemical usage and adopting eco-friendly maintenance routines. These initiatives not only conserve resources but also contribute to a healthier local environment by improving water quality, managing stormwater and reducing carbon footprints.

REWILDING

The rewilding of select areas, which involves restoring native vegetation and creating wildlife habitats, transforms these landscapes into thriving ecosystems that provide valuable services such as improved water retention and increased biodiversity. The rewilding process involves selectively returning portions of the course to a more natural state, reintroducing native vegetation and creating wildlife habitats. These rewilded areas often receive more dedicated management than surrounding bushland reserves, transforming them into biodiversity hotspots that support a variety of flora and fauna.

There is a shift at many golf courses to remove areas of managed turf in areas that are not in play and return them to native vegetation areas. The integration of these areas has yielded significant benefits beyond aesthetics at many golf courses. These not only reduce the time and resources dedicated to maintaining rough areas, and thus to substantial long-term cost

savings. Commonwealth Golf Club in Victoria, converted over six hectares of mown rough into naturalised rough, increasing biodiversity by reducing mowing, water and chemical usage.

Counterintuitively, golf courses are not dead spaces with only grass as far as the eye can see, many courses have pockets of indigenous vegetation — some of it rare and of conservation status. These overlooked pockets of biodiversity are valuable resources for local plant growers who frequently visit to collect seeds and cuttings, contributing to conservation efforts and augmenting plant stock at local plant nurseries.

To enhance their environmental impact, some golf courses are proactively planting rare and endangered plant species. In doing this within the controlled environment of the golf course, they become protected from the potential disturbances that occur in public parks and reserves.

In South Australia, Green Adelaide (the local natural resource management board) has been working for twenty years to rewild an extinct butterfly, the Yellowish Sedge Skipper. Last seen in 1985, it is thought the Skipper became extinct due to indiscriminate spraying and the decline of its host plant, *Gahnia filum* (Chaffy Saw Sedge). Skippers prefer to lay their eggs on freshly-burnt *Gahnia*, so a controlled environment, like a golf course, is a perfect opportunity to release the butterfly. Glenelg Golf Club, Royal Adelaide Golf Club and Grange Golf Club are planting *Gahnia filum* on their courses, creating suitable habitats for the future release of Skippers.

FILTRATION PONDS

Some clubs also have filtration ponds built within the course. These serve a dual purpose: they collect stormwater runoff from surrounding residential areas (which reduces the volume of water flowing into drains) and then filters and cleans the water, which is then used for irrigation on the course.

WILDLIFE HABITATS

Golf courses are becoming valuable partners in wildlife conservation efforts, providing suitable habitats for the safe release of rescued and rehabilitated animals. Arundel Hills Country Club is a prime example of a golf course embracing its status as a wildlife sanctuary through the Koalas on the Green program.

This program was inspired by the rescue of Charles, a koala suffering from chlamydial conjunctivitis found near the golf course in mid-2019. Charles faced a grim prognosis. He was likely to succumb to starvation, a car accident or dog attack due to his limited vision. However, after successful treatment at Australia Zoo's wildlife hospital, the new challenge became finding a suitable release location for Charles. Arundel Hills presented the ideal solution, offering a safe haven. This successful release inspired David, Charles's rescuer, to initiate the Koalas on the Green program. This program encourages golf courses to plant food and habitat trees, creating vital sanctuaries and food resources for urban koala populations.

Sadly, Arundel Hills is now closed and faces the threat of housing development. This not only jeopardises the critical habitat for koalas but also results in the loss of a significant greenspace valued by the local community!

Golf courses, with their diverse ecosystems provide vital habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including birds, microbats, insects, turtles, frogs and reptiles. In urban environments, where natural habitats are increasingly scarce, courses offer crucial refuge for many species.

GOLF FORE NATURE

We have been working with golf courses around Australia to populate data in our Golf Fore Nature project on iNaturalist — a free citizen science platform that encourages users to upload observations on any living organism. These findings are confirmed by other users and become research-grade findings that can then be quoted by scientists and researchers.

The Golf Fore Nature project currently has 15 golf clubs participating and has recorded over 1,100 observations of over 560 species. This impressive data set underscores the significant biodiversity thriving within these often-overlooked greenspaces. Thirteenth Beach Golf Links is the latest Club to join the project.

WHAT'S NEXT?

With the support of Sport Hawke's Bay, Disability & Recreation Hawke's Bay, staff, whānau and the tamariki who participated in our first event, we've demonstrated that multisport can be enjoyed by everyone. Our goal is to build on this success.

These pioneering tamariki have smashed down so many potential barriers, paving the way for more tamariki and rangatahi (teenagers) across Aotearoa to participate in future No Limits Para-Try-Athlons.

Our aim is to continue growing this event at Napier Aquatic Centre, and to work with other aquatic facilities to offer similar events. We plan to hold this event twice a year, during Terms 1 and 4, when the weather is warmer. I'd love to build a No Limits community, where participants train for the Napier Aquatic Centre No Limits Para-Try-Athlon, then compete in regional events.

Future plans include collaborating with Hohepa Adult Care Facility to involve rangatahi and adults in multisport. Our next event is scheduled for late November, and we're expecting an even higher turnout based on the positive experience of tamariki and their support crew. We hope to see plenty of tamariki, rangatahi and whānau at Napier Aquatic Centre cheering on our amazing athletes.

OPERATION POLLINATOR

Initiatives like Operation Pollinator, a program gaining traction in Australia where golf courses plant pollinator plots, further demonstrates a commitment to environmental stewardship. A 2012-2014 study conducted by the Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association in collaboration with the University of Melbourne, examined the biodiversity benefits of urban golf courses. The research compared native bee populations on thirteen Melbourne golf courses to those found in nearby residential areas and park reserves.

Employing sweep nets and coloured pan traps, researchers captured over 1000 individual bees, identifying at

least 30 distinct native bee species. Surprisingly, golf courses, on average, supported a higher diversity of bee species than both residential areas and nearby nature reserves!

Researchers hypothesised that more intact remnant habitats would harbour greater bee diversity. However, the study revealed that golf courses provided the most significant refuge for native bees within the urban landscape. This finding likely stems from the abundance of nectar-bearing plants on golf courses.

Despite their prevalence, European honey bee populations still face a significant threat from the devastating varroa mite. For this reason, many golf courses across Australia have established bee hives on their grounds. The honey produced is used in various ways, from enriching the culinary offerings at the clubhouse restaurant to being sold to club members.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a cornerstone of modern golf course management. Many courses actively foster environmental education through programs like nature walks and wildlife tours, cultivating a deeper appreciation for the surrounding ecosystem among both golfers and the wider community. These initiatives not only raise awareness about conservation but also highlight the valuable role that golf courses can play in preserving local biodiversity.

Public courses have an opportunity to play a crucial role in promoting inclusivity and accessibility, offering affordable recreational options and contributing to the physical and mental wellbeing of their communities. Local councils and greenspace managers have a unique opportunity to collaborate with local golf courses to enhance community greenspaces, foster wildlife habitats, safeguard endangered plant species through seed banks and create engaging educational spaces for public use.

The evolving relationship between golf and nature signifies a promising future where golf courses not only offer recreational opportunities but also function as vital ecosystems that support biodiversity, environmental health and inclusive community spaces. This harmonious coexistence sets a precedent for other sports to follow suit in promoting environmental conservation and sustainability. ■

Stepping stones provide implicit play permission.
Image Paul Patterson, City of Sydney



POPTED

PLAY OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (POpTED)

WORDS DR DAMIEN PUDDLE, INVERCARGILL CITY COUNCIL

Traditionally the provision of play (especially for children) has been limited to specific zones of participation: parks, playgrounds and sports facilities. But these are not the only places people play. Nor are they always the preferred places. There is growing awareness of the need to better provide the time, space and freedom for play in our cities. This means turning our cities into places where play is an everywhere activity.

Traditional play, recreation and sports facilities are a great starting point. But they cannot be the endpoint for play in our cities. There are examples of playful / playable designs incorporated into art and infrastructure in cities throughout the world. Unfortunately, these are the exception instead of the rule.

In fact, children's voices are often underrepresented in local government, and although a growing number of resources demonstrate how to make cities more playable and child-friendly, few directly influence city planning in a way that embeds play across all local government layers. Even when these wonderful examples are held

up as great case studies or even best practice, the inclusion of play and other elements such as art and landscaping, are often the last to be added and the first to be removed (ie. they are "value engineered" out).

Local government and their partners need a tool at their disposal to:

- a. Understand how play can be enabled in non-traditional locations and assets that wouldn't have previously considered play,
- b. span project timelines and professions so play is considered every step of the way, and
- c. be able to be incorporated within strategic documentation including district plans, technical regulations, policies and strategies.

PLAY OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (POPTED)

POpTED is that tool. Modelled off Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), POpTED is a five-principle approach that distils the key considerations for creating a quality non-playground play opportunity. At

the start of a play development process, POpTED draws attention to the child's right to play. Throughout the process, it provides important people-centred considerations to maximise urban design function and participation. At the end of the process, POpTED is the measuring stick to see what has been achieved for play.

The POpTED principles have been developed for application at any stage of design and can support developers, planners, project managers, architects, landscape architects and designers to ensure these important play topics have been addressed. It will not always be possible or perhaps even necessary to incorporate all POpTED principles to achieve a great play opportunity, but consideration must be given to them at the beginning of a project, regularly addressed throughout, and justifications given if they cannot be achieved.

MULTIPURPOSE DESIGN

Items and areas are adaptable and responsive to changing needs by encouraging informal play through multifunctional design.

Cities should not just be functional, they should also be adaptable and invite opportunities for informal play. By adding play as one of the possible functions of things we plan for, design and build, we can make more things multipurpose and cater to more people. This can be achieved by designing spaces and assets that can be used for several activities depending on need and desire. Examples include street furniture and landscaping arranged to enable play, designed using materials that can withstand regular interactive use, or other novel layouts and features applied to traditional infrastructure.

Unfortunately, play is not palatable to everyone. Multipurpose features, however, can meet children's needs and make a fun and playable city for everyone else who likes to play, with less chance of offending various city stakeholders. Ultimately, this is the foundational principle that POpTED is based on. The other four principles focus on maximising participation.

PERMISSION

Play is encouraged by providing implicit or explicit invitations to explore via intentional design choices and wayfinding.

Multipurpose spaces can sometimes fall foul of social norms and conflicting interpretations that undermine our intent. To solve this, we need to design permission to play into our work. This can be implicit by including obvious and inviting landscape features that promote playful interaction, or explicit through things like signage or wayfinding.

JOURNEY

Design choices increase the overall network of easily accessible and playable spaces and encourage playful active travel.

We already have a strong focus on destinations: homes, work, shops, sport and recreation facilities, playgrounds, etc. Attention must be given to how the journey between these spaces can be more fun and better connected. Design choices should not just support active travel connectivity and improve access to destinations. The routes should include playful features that entice people to take those routes in the first place.

CONTEXT

Play opportunities are relevant to their environment and offer seamless integration across settings. The type of play experience matters and should

relate to its place-based context: proximity to schools, shops, universities, retirement villages and museums, for example. This ensures that play opportunities are relevant to the local community. Further, as play can occur in a variety of settings, including indoor and outdoor, private and public spaces, the integration of these spaces can create a seamless and engaging environment as people transition between them, promoting a culture of play.

PEOPLE

The play needs of as many users as appropriate are considered and social inclusivity between groups is promoted.

Things like age, sex, culture and physical abilities influence play needs and desires. Therefore, the last principle is about the user demographics: who might use the space and what their needs are.

Important stories need to be told in our designs, so people feel welcome. Different play types to suit different preferences (such as more challenging play for youth and adults) are enabled. And amenities are provided to support users and their caregivers to stay for longer.

Ultimately, the recommendation here is to consider as many users as appropriate, though not necessarily everyone. For instance, in play, children should always be the priority because their voice is the most absent from city planning and design. They also have very little ability to exercise control over what opportunities they can access.

CONCLUSION

To set children's futures up for success, we must embed their needs — especially play — into our processes from start to finish. POpTED consolidates important play considerations and equips local governments and its partners with the means to ensure our cities meet play needs now and into the future. For more information, visit Play Opportunities Through Environmental Design (POpTED) at damienpuddle.com/popted



The original POpTED. Hamilton, New Zealand.
Image Damien Puddle



Why sit when you can play?
Image The Urban Conga



The Dutch Woonerf (living street).
Image Streetfilms



Adaptive Obstacle Course by Caitlin Pontrella and The Movement Creative, New York



Rollers are an example of play embedded into the journey.
Image Damien Puddle



NO ONE GETS LEFT BEHIND

SPECIALIST HOOPS: AN INSPIRING TALE OF DETERMINATION AND PERSEVERENCE

WORDS EMILY ATTARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SPECIALIST HOOPS

As a young girl growing up on the outskirts of the western suburbs of Melbourne, my parents instilled in me that you always give back to the community that has given so much to you. For me, my community was the basketball community. I played, I coached, I refereed, I scored – anything you can think of in this arena, I did it. One morning while refereeing, I had an U8's game where a young boy wanted to wear big noise cancelling ear muffs while playing. He feared the noises on the court and the vibrations coming from the floor, so he wasn't comfortable and didn't feel like he was able to play.

I made an exception for him to play, letting him take his earmuffs onto the court. I also had a conversation with him to make him feel more comfortable and let him walk up and down the court with me. By the end of the game, he had made small steps towards playing, which was huge for him given he flat out refused to play at first.

After this game, I spoke to the boy's coach and she told me that in her team of nine players, seven of them were living with a disability. One player was born with Down Syndrome while other players sat on the spectrum (autism spectrum disorder) or were afflicted with ADHD or developmental delays.

This conversation got me thinking. Where do these children go when they get older? You very rarely see a young person living with a disability playing in mainstream local sports and, when you do, 99 percent of the time they get minimal playing time or aren't included because they "make things too hard". They are accused of "always losing the ball" or "they don't know what they are doing." This isn't fair or inclusive. The many questions sparked for me were:

- Why should people living with disability miss out on playing a sport?
- Shouldn't everyone have the same opportunities to play sport?
- Why aren't we more inclusive?
- Why are people so mean?

As a 15-year-old girl, I didn't believe I could do a whole lot to change this. I was still in high school and the only money I had was what I had earned as a referee. My mission was to do something so everyone had the opportunity to play basketball. It was my time to give back to the community that had given so much to me.

THE PLAN

In planning, I came up with the idea of Specialist Hoops. It was about providing those living with disability to play sport

in a safe, controlled, non-judgemental environment. I spent many hours while in class at school researching if there were different programs available for those living with disability, and I found nothing that was for young people! I saved up all my money, reached out to local businesses for support (we received a donation from a local businessman, Ross) and decided I was going to provide a one-day skills clinic for those living with disability.

In the lead up to this day, I engaged Basketball Victoria to come out to Melton and provide Inclusion Training to all the coaches I had asked to participate in the day. I also opened it up to the community – the more people with education around inclusion the better.

On 25 September 2017, Specialist Hoops held its very first All Abilities Day. We had a staggering 22 participants from the ages of five through to 26 years of age attend. The day was a huge success despite all the struggles of obtaining a court for the day. It included stationed activities and games where everyone learned something new, and had fun! Parents were able to connect with other parents and it started a community.

Once the day ended, I had parents asking me when the next day was,

I couldn't give them an answer. I didn't know. But I knew I had to do something. I didn't have the funds to hire a court each week and I didn't have the weekly coaches. It was just me and the support of my parents. I was lucky my Mum was able to help, but this was my idea and I needed to do it. Thankfully, I was encouraged to do it.

Almost 12 months on I had saved up enough money to get one school term of court hire. I thought we could actually get up and running weekly. I was ecstatic! Unfortunately, this is when more challenges hit. I learned the community wasn't accepting of the program. I was hit with a list of negative roadblocks, such as, "You'll never get insurance. You can pay us to book the courts and when we want to give it to you, we will, but it won't be a priority. People like that can't play sports. You're making money off these children."

PHASE TWO

All of these comments didn't deter us, Specialist Hoops was going to happen. We were lucky enough that a local club, Falcon Rebels, approached us and wanted to help. They booked the courts when we wanted them and donated two school terms worth of court hire and playing bibs. This allowed us to purchase equipment like basketballs, cones and ladders.

Each participant was charged a small fee of \$10 per week, to assist with the running costs, which allowed us to continue to run once the initial sponsorship came to an end. I was always taught to have six months' rent so you have

somewhere to go if all else fails.

At our first session, we had five young people attend. I was so happy that someone turned up. It meant our program was needed. We quickly grew and by the end of 2018 we had 26 participants of all ages. Going into 2019, we secured weekly court hire through the City of Melton and were able to run with insurance by staying connected with the Falcon Rebels.

In 2019, our program began to really expand. The development of a Juniors and a Seniors program pushed us over 2-3 courts, with around 50 participants overall. We started an international partnership with the Be a 9th Wonder Foundation in Texas, USA, and we also tried to rebuild a relationship with our initial organisation, but was hit with more red tape that would put our running costs through the roof, making our goals unobtainable.

A NEW HOPE

At the start of 2020 we found our missing link, a coach who answered our Wanted advertisement for coaches in the local Star weekly. Coach John brought with him a world of knowledge about basketball and connection with the neighbouring town of Bacchus Marsh, which we now call home!

After a few meetings and conversations with Bacchus Marsh Basketball Association, we knew they were our home. We added Bacchus Marsh as a new location for Specialist Hoops. As much as we only had a few weeks on court at the start of the year, with few touch points throughout

the year, we managed to navigate the challenges of Covid by going online as a way for people to stay connected. We shared how our week was, what we were up to, the amazing arts and crafts developed by the players, we played games and got to know each other on a deeper level off the court. This helped everyone to build meaningful relationships without realising it. Each participant received a basketball during this time to stay active and feel a sense of belonging to a community.

In 2021, we introduced Ten Pin bowling (funded by Reclink Australia until 2023). We also introduced wheelchair basketball to Bacchus Marsh in the form of our Get Your Wheels On program. In 2022, we launched our first All Abilities Tournament in the West, which now runs yearly, and in 2024, Multi Sports was introduced to Cobblebank, a session during the week for players to play different sports in multisport chairs.

Our biggest year to date was 2024. We had over 120 participants across 3 locations, we ran Outdoor Adventure days with Edmund Rice, GAS and Vic Health. We had a Harmony Day with Victoria Police Basketball, where we had relationship and cyber safety education sessions and time on court playing. We had our second bi-annual gala event. We had our annual tournament held in Bacchus Marsh, followed by the introduction of Play23, a new program allowing mainstream and the ability world to come together. We also had an adventure to Horsham for a tournament and corporate box seating at the NBL. We opened a trial

location in Sunbury, which ultimately found its home in Gisborne with the support of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council. Our coaches had a training day out at Rod Laver with Wheelchair Basketball Games and a coach's clinic from Basketball Australia Coaches.

And now, 2025 is already shaping up to be a big year. We've already participated in a tournament, we introduced Play23 into Frankston in January, which will bring us to operating five evenings a week, plus a new Parents Respite High Team in works, just to name a few new initiatives to start the year!

THE CHALLENGES

As the years have gone on, our challenges might not be as present as they were when we first started, but they still exist. We struggled to obtain funding, due to changes to NDIS, whereby some places consider us as just playing basketball, they don't see that basketball is our method of therapy, we are an entry-level program. We teach hand-eye coordination, relationship building, teamwork, patience, time management and communication

skills. We provide a sense of belonging in a community where those living with disability feel valued and accepted, a place where they don't get left behind and have access to opportunities like everyone else.

We struggle to get coaches to join us. Not due to a lack of trying, but due to a lack of education. The most common thing we hear is "but I don't know how to work with those people" or "I know basketball, but I'm not trained to work with them." These comments are the reason we can't get volunteers. The education around working with people with disability can be taught, and it doesn't have to be in a classroom. All you need to have is respect and patience, and to listen to how you can help.

Our challenges hinder our growth. We are not able to run without volunteers or funding — the work we do isn't easy. For three volunteers who work tirelessly each week, on top of their own everyday fulltime work, and 10 other weekly volunteer coaches, the work we do is invaluable to our community.

Specialist Hoops is a fighting business and we will not give up!

We fight for what is right and take each challenge as it comes. With 2025 underway, Specialist Hoops is now seven years old (eight in July) and I am 23. As I've grown in this endeavour, I have learned a lot about the world and how business operates and what community expectations are. We have a big year planned with plenty of more opportunities to come. ■



FAILING TO MAINTAIN TREE COVER

WORDS ANNIKA BURGESS, ABC URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING & RICHARD WILLINGHAM, ABC STATE POLITICAL REPORTER

Despite many trees being visually apparent, Melbourne and Sydney's central suburbs fail to have adequate canopy cover (ABC News: Seraphine Charpentier-Andre). Based on the 3-30-300 rule, devised by Dutch urban forestry expert Cecil Konijnendijk, the guidelines state residents should see three trees from their window, be in a neighbourhood with at least 30 percent canopy cover, and be within 300 metres of a park.

If you look out the window and can see three trees, and are within 300 metres of a park, you are off to a good start. If your neighbourhood also has 30 percent canopy cover, then it will pass the 3-30-300 access to nature test. But, according to new research, most major cities studied do not reach that minimum standard — Melbourne and Sydney among them. Researchers say trees need to be given more priority during planning to help cities stay cool.

Research by RMIT University, in collaboration with the Technical University of Munich, analysed more than 2.5 million buildings across eight cities globally, namely Melbourne (central), Sydney (central), Singapore, Amsterdam (Netherlands), Seattle (US), Denver (US), New York City (US) and Buenos Aires (Argentina). Based on the 3-30-300 rule, devised by Dutch urban forestry expert Cecil Konijnendijk, the study found most of the cities failed international tree canopy goals.

Professor Konijnendijk said he devised the benchmark to help set a "bare minimum" for nature in cities. "Getting more parks and trees into cities is complicated work, and I realised that a simple metric could take the mystery out of it and set a proper benchmark based on evidence. I reviewed decades of science linking nature to human health and found that views to nature, canopy cover and parks are all really essential

if we want to be mentally healthy, physically active and safe from heatwave impacts," states Professor Konijnendijk.

The study, published in Nature Communications, found only Singapore and Seattle passed the 30 percent canopy benchmark. Seattle passed with 45 percent of buildings enjoying adequate shade. In Singapore, 75 percent of buildings were shaded. Just 3 percent of buildings in Melbourne's innermost suburbs had sufficient neighbourhood canopy cover, despite 44 percent having views of at least three trees. Across central Sydney, at least three trees were visible from 84 percent of buildings, but only 17 percent had "enough" shade. New York and Amsterdam both scored almost 0 percent for canopy cover, despite 92 percent and 50 percent of buildings respectively having views of at least three trees.

Lead researcher Thami Croeser, RMIT's Centre for Urban Research,



REDEFINING PLAY SPACES

P: 03 9338 9851
E: sales-australia@icpgroup.com
W: californiasportssurfaces.com





said better canopy cover was urgently needed as tree cover was important for citizens' health and wellbeing, and to cool cities as summer temperatures continued to soar. "Studies say we actually need at least 40 percent canopy cover to substantially lower daytime air temperatures, so the 30 metric is the absolute bare minimum. Most buildings we studied don't even reach that goal," he said.

"We know depression, anxiety, obesity and heat stroke are more prevalent in urban areas lacking access to shady tree canopy and green open spaces," he adds.

For Sydney and Melbourne, the study was based on central-city suburbs only. Both showed similar patterns to most of the global cities; there was a good number of trees in view, but canopy cover was low. Less than a quarter of the Melbourne neighbourhoods studied reached more than 20 percent tree cover. In Sydney, about one-third were close to meeting the 30 percent guidelines.

Professor Croeser said recent European research shows similar results, and it appeared that trees were simply too small. "It seems like a lot of people have views to enough trees, but they're not getting enough canopy ... We see this in places like Paris and Madrid, and in German cities as well".

The 3-30-300 rule is still a relatively new concept for urban planning in Australia, but it has been gaining momentum internationally. At least six cities in Europe, the US and Canada have implemented the measure in their urban forestry strategies.

Professor Croeser said there were other initiatives in place across parts

of Sydney and Melbourne to improve canopy cover, but often trees were still not prioritised when planning streetscapes. "Currently, we put trees last, and if it gets in the way of cabling or pipes, we remove the tree or replace it with a sapling," he said. He added that trees were often planted in tough conditions, in compact soil under asphalt to prevent them from growing into 'big old canopy trees'. It's a perfect environment for growing small, sick, sad trees. But there are excellent systems that work to get big soil volumes into the ground and allow water to access that," he notes.

The Electricity Line Clearing Consultative Committee recommended branches in low-risk areas only be pruned 30cm, instead of 1m. The committee said the change could help combat increased temperatures in urban areas due to climate change.

Victoria could tackle extreme heat by adding \$1 billion worth of tree shade to suburban streets and rural towns, IF a plan from experts to reduce pruning around powerlines was adopted. But the state government has rejected advice from its own technical panel on rules for clearing around electricity lines, opting instead for what it calls "a more gradual change".

Every day, crews across the state prune and lop back branches from powerlines. Currently, trees in low-risk areas with low-voltage powerlines are cut back one metre. However, the state's Electricity Line Clearing Consultative Committee (ELCCC) has recommended that in low-risk areas, branches only need to be trimmed by 30 centimetres.

The University of Melbourne's Greg Moore, a member of the ELCCC, said reducing the amount of foliage it cuts back would enhance the state's tree canopy, and deliver \$1 billion of benefits, without any extra taxpayer investment. "You get much greater canopy cover. You get much greater shade, much greater cooling, all the important things for summer. But you'll also get other

benefits, such as... lower fuel bills because you won't have to use your air conditioning so much," Dr Moore states.

In Melbourne's sprawling western suburbs, a lack of tree cover can make the summer heat unbearable. But work is underway to build a greener, cooler future. Melbourne's west is particularly vulnerable, and the state government is aiming to plant 500,000 trees in the area, which has the lowest tree canopy in the city. It's why some experts are baffled by the government's rejection of the new pruning policy. "I'm very concerned that Victoria, as a government, is sleepwalking into climate change. In an urban context, we're losing canopy cover, and we're losing trees through development," says Dr Moore.

Western Victorian farmer Howard Templeton became involved in the ELCCC a decade ago because he was tired of seeing trees in his hometown of Coleraine hacked back unnecessarily. "I'm getting sick and tired of travelling around country Victoria and seeing trees that are that are just hacked, they're not pruned. The trees were just absolutely butchered," he claims.

The veteran volunteer firefighter rejects any suggestion that the policy would increase bushfire risk. "The damage that's inflicted on those trees under the current legislation actually weakens the trees, makes them more likely to have branches that blow off and end up in power lines. If they were to accept the recommendation that came from the committee, that would be less likely to happen." ■

NOTE

This article is a combined feature that contains expert commentary by two eminent urban forestry professionals, Professor Thami Croeser and Dr Greg Moore, both of whom have been key speakers at past Parks & Leisure Australia National Conferences.



CONSULTATIVE, CONSIDERED AND UNAPOLOGETIC

HOW WE NEED TO GO ABOUT DESIGNING SPACES FOR GIRLS

WORDS DR KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR, CEO OF NATURE PLAY WA

Recently, I have noticed a dramatic increase in the number of pump tracks being developed across Western Australia. There are also new playgrounds, and the odd skate park, but pump tracks seem to be the clear preference. At a glance, this is a great outcome. My job is to advocate for kids to have the time and space in our communities to play, be physically active and socially connected. But the rollout of these types of recreational facilities was not sitting well with me.

I kept wondering how it was decided that this was the best thing to offer kids, and why we were producing so many of the same type of thing. I wondered if anyone had asked teen girls (the holders of the unenviable title of the group getting the least physical activity and suffering the most social isolation) what they want.

I think we see pump tracks being used and conclude that "kids" like them. But when we take a minute to look at who is using these pump tracks, it's not a very diverse or inclusive picture.

I want teen girls to love riding and skating. And, while some do, it appears that barely any use these types of facilities. We have hardly any research in Australia on the use of these types of recreational spaces. What we do have suggests that facilities like skate parks and pump tracks are used between 95-99 percent by boys and

men. In addition, the majority of the approximately five percent of women and girls accounted for are largely watching or supervising, rather than participating. I assume the figures for kids with disabilities and culturally diverse kids are even lower. While we might see some younger girls battling it out with the boys on the tracks, this seems to all but disappear by the time they are thirteen.

I recently attended a physical activity and health conference in Paris that clarified this issue further for me. I saw speaker after speaker highlight the need to get girls physically active and connected, and to design spaces for kids of all abilities and interests. The point made was that we need multimodal spaces. Meaning, we need to offer spaces with variation and diversity that accommodate all types of community members, including girls, multicultural communities, kids with disability, and kids with no money, no bikes and no skateboards. We need to create spaces where girls and less-sporty boys feel safe from harassment and ridicule, and where everyone feels physically and culturally safe (the threat of racism is a big deterrent for many people in our communities).

There was just no clear answer as to how to achieve this. Someone asked, "What are we doing about the boys?", inferring that boys (and men) are the

ones making others feel unwelcome. The truth is, it's not boys and men that are the problem, it's the facilities we are providing and what that tells them.

I want boys to enjoy public spaces, to hang out with mates and be healthy and connected. We don't need to bring boys down to lift girls up. What has become clear to me is that we are building spaces that we know boys will use (almost exclusively), and through their very design, we are telling boys, "This space is for you." Then we get upset when they act like the space is exclusively for them. We have been doing this for a long time and expecting girls to battle through and win a space, then are disappointed when they choose not to or are made to feel unwelcome.

I don't think we need to over-police play or build separate spaces, but we certainly need to start building spaces that are for girls. We need to be consultative, considered and unapologetic in the designs. Like the pump tracks, everyone will be encouraged to use them.

There are a few things we could do to better cater for girls (and gender diverse kids). An important first step is understanding how spaces are being used. My organisation is planning to undertake a ParkWatch project similar to the one undertaken in the UK as part of the Make Space for Girls initiative. It's a simple process

of observing who is (and isn't) using recreational spaces. The data out of the UK was very telling. It recorded that 88 percent of the teenagers using the observed park and recreational facilities were boys. For MUGAs (Multi-Use Games Areas, such as fenced pitches for football or basketball), the most common facilities, it was 92 percent.

It is also very important to acknowledge that the experience of recreational space use is not universal. For women and girls, the sense of security in public spaces is shaped by an interplay of physical, environmental and social elements. Navigating our safety (physical, social, emotional and online safety) can be exhausting and overwhelming, and can be a significant barrier to girls participating in recreational spaces. It is unreasonable to expect men to understand this, having not experienced it in the same way or to the same degree.

The next step is having women and girls involved in designing and planning spaces. A diverse planning team (gender, race, disability, culture) ensures better community representation and better spaces. Perhaps most importantly, is consultation with girls. We adults

grew up in a completely different time and cannot possibly consider all the factors that influence a teenage girl's motivations or barriers to engaging in spaces today. Girls are articulate, creative and thoughtful, and consulting with them has drastically improved every project that I have worked on.

The consultation that I have been involved in with girls on recreational spaces has largely mirrored what is said in the research: that girls enjoy nature's beauty (water, flowers and trees) and socialising is almost always the priority, even when being physically active. Make Space for Girls UK has some great designs to use as a starting point in the consultation process.

Girls tend to enjoy elevated spaces (they feel safer and offer some privacy while being able to see who is around) but need to be able to climb up without using much upper body strength – ideally, using big broad steps (to walk together and not give unwanted views from below). They preferred spaces divided up for diverse activities. Big spaces tend to be dominated by one group. Natural landscaping is a perfect way to break up spaces.

Girls report liking to sit and chat, facing each other and away from ovals

and large spaces. Park benches on the side of ovals weren't designed with this in mind and don't meet this brief. More circular designs tend to be preferred.

Where many teen and tween boys enjoy high bars to pull up on, girls prefer slightly lower bars to swing on, lean on and muck around on, designed so as to not invite male workouts. Hammocks and large swings where groups can swing together and chat are always popular in girl-led design.

Some other basics that should be obvious but sometimes aren't: weather-friendly design and toilets. No one wants to get wet hair and clothes, least of all teenage girls. Getting sunburnt and sweaty are also highly undesirable. Girls also need access to bathrooms. Unlike boys and men, women and older girls don't have the option of a "tree wee" and toilets are required for dealing with unexpected period matters.

As planners and providers of parks and recreational spaces, we need to be committed to providing more varied facilities to meet the needs of girls. Girls and women are not a minority, and catering for them should be mainstream. When we cater for girls, we create more diverse and welcoming spaces, and the whole community benefits. ■

RECREATION IS A SOCIAL INVESTMENT

"RECREATION IS SOCIALLY ORGANISED FOR SOCIAL OUTCOMES" – CUSHMAN AND LAIDLER¹

WORDS RECREATION AOTEAROA

Recreation Aotearoa publishes quarterly *INSIGHTS* publications on different timely topics for its members. In *INSIGHTS* #44, we share case studies that show the positive effects of recreation. Each highlight a clear return on investment in the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

INVESTMENT IN RECREATION

National and local governments, charitable and community organisations value the contribution that recreation makes to society at individual, whānau and community levels. This is reflected in significant financial investment in spaces and places, organisations and campaigns, and in the human investment of expertise and time made by myriad recreation workers and volunteers.

There is a positive relationship between the investment cost and the benefits to New Zealanders.

INVESTMENT INFORMED BY INSIGHTS

The Government's Social Investment Model² is designed to use evidence, analysis and planning to drive action and benefit communities. It focuses on vulnerable or high-risk groups and invests early in the lifecycle, using local organisations in communities to provide services.

PRINCIPLES OF RECREATION

Recreation provides "opportunities for the development of human potential, social wellbeing, self-reliance and a sense of belonging to the community"³, which is why people participate. Recreation benefits the individual and collective.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF RECREATION?

The Sport NZ SROI study⁴ "demonstrates that recreational physical activity generates significant value for society across multiple outcomes." For every \$1 spent, there is a social return of \$2.12 to New Zealand, a value of \$16.81bn⁵. The value of the wellbeing outcomes

for New Zealand is greater than the costs of providing these opportunities. Recreational physical activity is a cost-effective investment!

Positive impacts occur in physical and mental health; subjective wellbeing; income consumption and wealth; employability, work satisfaction and work life balance; volunteering including caring for people and place; family and friends and emotional and physical safety. Health outcomes are the most significant wellbeing domain for measuring the impact of sport and physical activity.

SPACES AND PLACES

Invest in networked and accessible community facilities designed for flexibility, such as Eastern Community Sport and Recreation Hubs.

Remove barriers to inclusion and expand perception of facilities to focus on wellbeing.

Increase access to nature and its associated health benefits through accessible spaces, and opportunities to develop skills for participation.

Design safe, multiuse urban environments with opportunities to play, connect and be active.

Remember that immigrant experiences of the outdoors may differ.

See Sport NZ Spaces and Places Framework at sportnz.org.nz/resources/new-zealand-spaces-and-places-framework-2024/



ACTIVITIES, EVENTS AND PROGRAMMES

Invest in tailored activities and events with opportunities to participate in ways

that reflect cultural identity and promote a sense of belonging. Read about the Samoan Participation Profile. Offer diverse opportunities across the play, active recreation and sport continuum.

Community and national events can build awareness, leverage engagement, support local economies and encourage tourism. A good example is Palmerston North Shines (pncc.govt.nz/News-Events/News/Palmy-set-to-shine-as-events-expected-to-boost-the-city-this-weekend).

Invest in rangatahi and tamariki to create positive foundations for life. Child poverty and intergenerational inequality leads to unfair outcomes. See **Child Poverty report 2024** (treasury.govt.nz/publications/child-poverty-report/child-poverty-report-2024).

CASE STUDY 1: TE POU TOE TOE Linwood Pool, Christchurch City Council

With extensive community consultation and engagement before, during and after opening, the focus for Te Pou is on participation: a facility for having fun, being social and spending time with family and whānau. The voice of mana whenua has been woven into the planning, design and building of Te Pou, as well as programming.

The manu pool, kitchen / community room, family spa, and access to the outdoors for events and socialising, encourage whole-whānau engagement. Partnerships with youth providers and women-only sessions reflect the diverse community and need for tailored programmes. The 2022 / 23-year saw 309,566 pool users.

Te Pou received national recognition at the Recreation Awards in 2022.

See Sport NZ Te Pou Toetoe case study at sportnz.org.nz/

CASE STUDY 2: TE ORANGA KAIORA Wānanga Moana Programme

Nurturing Māori wellbeing through connection, culture and community, Harbour Sport, Auckland.

Through community consultation and partnerships, Harbour Sport developed a Wānanga Moana programme for 2023 with two local Kura Kaupapa Māori: Te Kura Kaupapa o Hoani Waititi and Te Kura Kaupapa o Te Raki Paewhenua.

Te Oranga Kaiora uses a multipronged approach to develop water safety practices, instil life skills, foster confidence, build capability in kai gathering, and revive the ancestral knowledge of tipuna Māori. The



Playgrounds engineered for the planet.

Austek Play supplies playground equipment crafted from 100% recyclable materials that don't compromise on longevity, safety, or performance.

- ♻️ HPL - 100% recycled + recovered
- ♻️ Stainless steel - 100% recyclable
- ♻️ Galvanized steel - 100% recyclable
- ♻️ Aluminum - 100% recyclable
- ♻️ HDPE - 100% recyclable

Design for tomorrow. Create unique play spaces that last.



1300 433 364
info@austekplay.com.au

www.austekplay.com.au

Scan for QualiCite range



programme has a strong emphasis on te reo Māori, tikanga and mātauranga Māori, fostering a deeper connection to Te Ao Māori.

While focusing on wellbeing and skill development, the programme also addresses ethnic disparities in drowning rates for Māori. Water Safety NZ noted a need for “culturally tailored water safety education and outreach programmes.” (Water Safety NZ, 2023, p.8)

See Harbour Sport Te Oranga Kaiora case study at nzrecreation.org.nz

CASE STUDY 3: TE PŪTAKE O TAWA MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL

Whakarewarewa Forest, Rotorua

Whakarewarewa Forest is iwi land, returned to its original owners in a Treaty of Waitangi settlement in 2006.

Diversified activity in this park includes mountain bike trails, accessible tracks and walks, an art trail, food franchises, as well as MTB events. Local iwi Tuhourangi hold whānau days including kapa haka, barbeques, bouncy castles, and The Great Race. Artwork also forms part of the project, with five taonga sharing the kōrero of tupuna, which are important to

Tūhourangi people, mana whenua.

Partners in management of Whakarewarewa Forest are CNI Iwi Holdings, Tuhourangi Tribal Authority, Te Komiti Nui o Ngāti Whakaeu, Rotorua Lakes Council and Kaingaroa Timberlands Forest Management.

See Te Pūtaka o Tawa Mountain Bike Trail Entranceway case study at sportnz.org.nz

INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

The following are relevant INSIGHTS publications that summarise evidence and action.

- Making Facilities Hum
- Celebrating Green Havens
- Urban Refuge, Restoration and Renewal in urban Aotearoa
- Spatial Justice: fair provision of places to play
- Outdoor Recreation in a Super-diverse NZ.



REFERENCES

1. Cushman and Laidler, Recreation, Leisure and Social Policy, 1990 Occasional Paper for Lincoln and Victoria Universities.
2. Social Investment Agency, Social investment approach.
3. Cushman and Laidler.
4. Sport NZ, Social Return on Investment key takeaways.
5. This is likely to be a conservative figure, as this does not include Māori outcomes, which were deliberately not monetised.
6. The Treasury, Social Investment: The Role of Data in Social Investment.
7. CNI is a central North Island iwi collective of eight iwi.

A GREENER FUTURE FOR SPORTS AND RECREATION IN AOTEAROA

WORDS GLENN MCGOVERN

In May 2024, Sport NZ launched its first Environmental Sustainability Guidelines for Spaces and Places, marking a major step towards a greener future for sports and recreation in Aotearoa (New Zealand). This comprehensive guide, developed with HDT Architecture, Beca, Projectworq, Visitor Solutions, and a project working group from the sport, recreation and environmental sectors, addresses the pressing need for practical sustainability guidelines.

Sport NZ’s guidelines aim to assist territorial authorities and sport and recreation organisations to navigate the range of environmental challenges impacting spaces and places for play, active recreation and sport. These guidelines focus on the environmentally sustainable

inception, design, construction and operation of spaces and places. They provide a roadmap to enhance current operations and make informed decisions for future investments.

HOW DOES SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SPACES AND PLACES?

In March 2023, the International Panel on Climate Change released its sixth report, concluding that current and future generations will live in a hotter world. Global average climate and weather extremes will continue to deviate from what we consider normal.

In New Zealand, the Auckland floods in January 2023 and Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle in early 2023 are examples of extreme weather events worsened by climate change. These

events caused widespread disruption to communities, livelihoods and the environment, including physical activity spaces damaged by extreme weather.

The Climate Change Response Act commits New Zealand to reducing net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. GHG emissions from spaces and places come from operations (mainly transportation and non-renewable energy use) and construction materials.

THE BENEFITS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Committing to sustainability challenges organisations to reconsider capital costs and embrace wide-ranging behavioural changes. The earlier these decisions are

benefits. These benefits include:

- Leaving the environment, no worse (preferably better) than it was found.
- Delivering higher quality and more financially efficient facilities.
- Meeting expectations of mana whenua, customers, and funders.
- Reducing whole-of-life costs.
- Greater resilience to maintaining operations under adverse conditions.
- Ensuring compliance with evolving sustainability requirements.
- Increasing the ability to meet international sustainability criteria for hosting events.
- Improved intergenerational appeal.

Sustainable practices benefit not just organisations but communities and society. Addressing sustainability-related challenges leads to long-term positive influences on our collective health and wellbeing – physically, mentally, culturally, economically and environmentally.

KEY SUSTAINABILITY CONCEPTS

To achieve an organisation’s sustainability vision, it’s essential that the approach to spaces and places addresses four key sustainability concepts:

1. Sustainability first
2. Whole of life
3. Needs assessment
4. Context

1. Sustainability First

Considering and implementing sustainable practice is no longer a nice to have. Aside from applicable regulatory requirements, it’s essential for the operational resilience, financial viability and long-term cost effectiveness of spaces and places.

2. Whole of Life

Projects must consider their long-term consequences. This includes the positive and negative impacts that spaces and places have on the community and the environment over the life of the asset. It also includes the affordability of operating facilities in the future. Fundamentally, the most sustainable development is no development at all. In many cases, a new facility should be the last option.

Consider using the Danish priority hierarchy to help with decision making.

- Collaborate/co-habit with a nearby community facility.
 - Refurbish an existing facility.
 - Re-purpose an existing facility.
- Consider up-front investments in areas such as greater energy

efficiency, which can deliver substantial dividends over the life of a facility.

- Build new if there are no other adequate solutions.

Excellent guidance on Life Cycle Assessment principles can be found on the Building Research Association of NZ website.

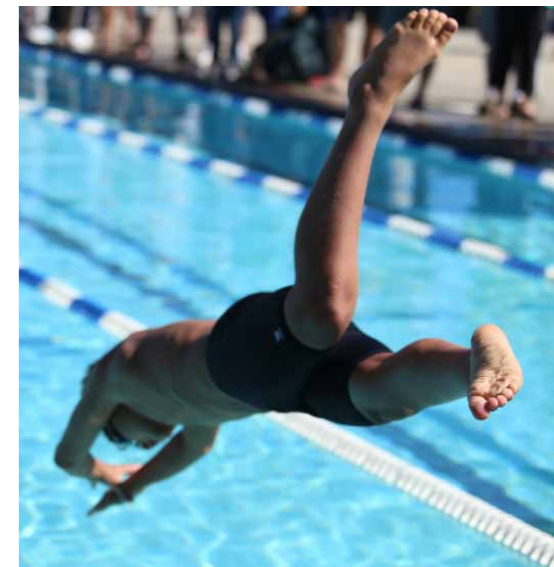
3. Needs Assessment

Thinking and acting sustainably means reducing excess and effectively utilising resources. Decision-making should be guided by careful consideration of needs, rather than wants, with a focus on the needs of potential future users of spaces and places.

4. Context

Facilities do not operate in isolation. They are parts of larger systems – social, cultural, transport, ecological and economic. Finding solutions that minimise negative impacts while creating win-win outcomes for the community requires working with a wide range of stakeholders and expertise as early as possible in the project. ■

Glenn McGovern is the Spaces & Places Manager for Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa. Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa is a kaitiaki of the play, active recreation and sport system in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a Crown entity, Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa promotes and supports quality experiences in play, active recreation and sport to improve levels of physical activity and, through this, ensure the greatest impact on wellbeing for all New Zealanders.



FIND OUT MORE

Sport NZ’s Environmental Sustainability Guidelines for Spaces and Places contains supplementary information on commonly used sustainability rating tools. It also provides more information on Whole of Life carbon costs, potential funding sources, trends in sustainable spaces and places, and best practice building fabric standards. Find the guidelines on the Sport NZ website.

GLOSSARY

- **MANA WHENUA** Territorial rights, power from the land, authority over land or territory, jurisdiction over land or territory. Power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land.
- **KAITIAKI** Trustee, minder, guard, custodian, guardian, caregiver, keeper, steward.





DESIGNING FOR GROWTH

IMPACTFUL INSIGHTS FROM CLOVERTON METROPOLITAN ACTIVITY CENTRE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

WORDS RACHEL THORPE, CO-ORDINATOR URBAN PLACES, HUME CITY COUNCIL — ON BEHALF OF REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP, VICTORIA

The Cloverton Regional Community and Recreational Needs Assessment (Needs Assessment) has gained widespread recognition as a transformative initiative, winning the Parks and Leisure Australia National Award of Excellence for Strategic and Master Planning in 2024. This project sets a benchmark for exemplary planning as urban areas across Australia face the challenges of rapid population growth, environmental sustainability and cultural inclusivity. Melbourne’s north is booming and the Needs Assessment is not merely a strategy document, it is a blueprint for building vibrant, resilient and connected communities.

The Cloverton Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC), located in Melbourne’s northern growth corridor, offers a distinctive combination of opportunities and challenges. Featuring extensive environmental, cultural, social and economic characteristics, the region is of state and national significance. The MAC will require a holistic approach to planning that incorporates the diversity of the community along with the needs of a rapidly growing population — estimated at approximately 380,000 (about the size of Canberra). To support this growth, community infrastructure and recreational facilities need to be planned comprehensively.

In response to these complexities, the Needs Assessment brought together three local councils — Hume, Mitchell and Whittlesea — to form a collaborative partnership unlike anything seen in Australia before. The partnership went beyond traditional planning frameworks to find innovative ways to fund, operate, manage and realise the benefits of community and recreational services and facilities. The impetus for the Needs Assessment stemmed from the Regional Partnership formed to undertake the ongoing planning for MAC, and from the recognition that traditional models of community and recreational planning often fall short of addressing the complexities of modern urban growth and community needs. A new standard

for cooperative governance and regional development was set by integrating strategic foresight with practical solutions.

An ambitious yet practical set of objectives guided the Needs Assessment:

- Designing resilient spaces and infrastructure to meet climate change challenges, chronic events and entrench environmental and cultural stewardship.
- Ensure facilities and services are accessible to all members of the community, including working with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung — Registered Aboriginal Party to embed cultural values.
- Enhancing social connections, resilience and regional identity through a cohesive network of recreational and community facilities.
- Maintaining relevance and functionality of services and infrastructure by anticipating long-term demographic and technological changes.

A robust and inclusive methodology contributed to the project’s success. This assessment was delivered by a multidisciplinary team, including urban planners, architects, community engagement specialists and representatives from state government agencies. Steps that were crucial included:

- Consultation was conducted extensively with local councils (Hume, Mitchell, Whittlesea), the developer Stockland, as well as regional and state government agencies.
- A systematic understanding of current and future needs was provided using geospatial analysis, catchment and demographic projections, and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- Analysing examples of national and international successful recreation and infrastructure planning to inform regional and local decisions.
- Modelling multiple development scenarios to assess how they would affect community and recreational needs was a component of the scenario planning process.

- The risk appetite process included identifying, evaluating, and prioritising potential project risks, aligning them with stakeholder objectives, and determining acceptable risk levels (including CEOs and elected members) to inform strategic planning and decision making.
- Establishing a set of design principles to support facility planning that promotes inclusivity, adaptability and alignment with Cloverton MAC’s overarching vision, ensuring that sustainable growth can be achieved by fostering cohesive and integrated development that meets diverse needs.
- Integrated a cost-benefit analysis into the evaluation and prioritisation of opportunities, ensuring optimal resource allocation and clear contributions to the community’s social, economic and environmental goals.

As a result of the needs assessment, actionable recommendations were developed that balance immediate needs with long-term aspirations. They include:

- A strategic distribution of integrated community hubs will include health and wellness services, a regional library, performing arts, sports and recreational facilities. Creating spaces that showcase Aboriginal land management practices, such as interpretive trails, public art, and ceremonial spaces that celebrate Woi-wurrung culture.
- Enhancing parks, trails and waterways to promote active lifestyles and ecological resilience through green and blue infrastructure. Utilising features such as rain gardens, wetlands and urban forests to reduce urban heat islands, integrate sustainable energy and develop circular economies.
- Introducing state-of-the-art sports facilities (Australia’s first 12 vertically stacked sports courts), health and wellness complex (specialising in warm water rehabilitation/theory), and integrated playing fields. Piloting initiatives that incorporate recreation and sustainability, such as the Urban Plaza (which includes Australia’s

AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LANDSCAPES

“Building sustainable landscapes one tree at a time”

Australian Environmental Landscapes specializes in restoring, rehabilitating, and maintaining bushland, as well as providing environmental landscaping, landscape construction, fencing, and parkland structures and their upkeep.

Our ability to balance commercial goals with ecological priorities ensures we deliver cost-effective solutions for government and commercial clients. We proudly serve all of Queensland and beyond.



We have unique expertise in balancing the commercial needs of the construction industry with the environmental objectives of ecologists. Get in touch to find out how we can help you.

P 07 3814 4559 | E info@aelscapes.com.au

aelscapes.com.au



- first dual function: drainage/flood-proof BMX and skate park, a splash pad and accessible wetlands to filter stormwater before it enters Merri Creek), as well as culturally sensitive urban agriculture projects.
- Integrating safe cycling paths and public transportation options into compact walkable neighbourhoods centred around pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

The needs assessment has been widely praised, but it was not without its challenges. Innovative solutions and compromises were needed to balance diverse stakeholder interests, navigate funding constraints, and address complex land-use patterns. Among the key lessons learned were:

- Building trust and securing buy-in from stakeholders early in the process proved critical to the project's

- success, including buy-in from elected members, which resulted in Victoria's first Joint Council Meeting ([youtube.com/watch?v=iUXzTnH3lyw&t=2701s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUXzTnH3lyw&t=2701s)). During this meeting, Hume, Whittlesea and Mitchell Councils formally endorsed the Regional Partnership and high-level vision / principles that underpin the Partnerships approach to Cloverton MAC planning.
- It was essential to incorporate flexibility to adapt to unexpected changes, such as shifts in policy or economic conditions.
 - Taking a holistic approach to community and recreational needs ensured a balance between economic, environmental and social considerations.
 - Cloverton's cultural and demographic diversity was recognised and embraced throughout the planning process.

The success of the needs assessment extends beyond Cloverton MAC; it serves as a model for regional partnerships driving impactful planning. This project illustrates the power of collaboration by aligning the efforts of local governments, developers and First Nations groups.

In addition, the needs assessment emphasises the importance of strategic and master planning for shaping equitable and sustainable urban futures. The principles and practices underlying this project offer valuable insights as cities across Australia struggle with similar growth pressures.

Through its innovative approach, grounded in inclusivity, sustainability and collaboration, the Needs Assessment sets a new standard for community infrastructure planning in growth areas. Winning the award illustrates the project's impact and the potential to inspire future initiatives.

As Cloverton evolves into a thriving new city, the Needs Assessment will continue to guide its development, ensuring that the community's needs remain at the forefront, as well as providing a blueprint for how urban growth can be harnessed to bolster community resilience. It is a blueprint for thriving, sustainable communities. ■



Bradbury Park is a district level park, located in a high-growth inner-urban area. While younger children are well-catered for in the park, through other recent Council investments such as an award winning scooter track and nature playspace, there was a gap to meet the needs of older children.

Council developed a creative brief based on the concept of the biological city, which contemplates the complex patterns, interrelationships and movements found within natural systems. For example, the bustle of a termite mound or decomposition under a rotting log. The goal was to create a visually organic structure that blended into its natural surroundings and contained myriad connections to be explored. Once completed, occupation of the structure would simulate the wonderful complexity and busyness of a natural biological system. Play would not rely on traditional catalogued play equipment, instead being non-prescriptive, encouraging curiosity, imagination and self-directed play.

Council assembled a team of creative industry professionals through a competitive tender process, and contracts were established setting delivery of the ambitious vision as the core deliverable. The extended core project team included council officers, architects, landscape architects, arborists, engineers, playground specialists and other supporting professionals, overseen by a principal landscape construction contractor to ensure constructability and affordability were managed throughout the whole process.

The project team spent countless hours researching play and analysing positive play experiences found at the core of existing play environments and infrastructure, from the physical function to the appearance. The team also observed the way children interact to determine the essence of their play experience. Designs were then developed that provided these core experiences without resorting to traditional play equipment fitments.

A cleverly integrated architectural and landscape wonder, Bradbury Park

playspace is nestled in a beautiful park setting, and promises an unparalleled play experience for children and their families. With something for everyone, even the most adventurous children will not lose interest. It is a testament to innovation and inclusivity, encouraging children to embark on exciting adventures and make lasting memories. The well-designed public space respects the natural environment, providing mental health benefits and improving community wellbeing through social inclusion. Two critical ingredients make this playspace successful and truly unique: challenging equipment and a self-directive play approach.

Experts in childhood development strongly believe older children should test boundaries and their abilities, and that these experiences during childhood prepare them for challenges in adulthood. They also want to explore more difficult environments independently of their parents / carers. The Bradbury Park playspace provides a wide variety of challenging features and environments where children can test themselves. The scale and design are such that they feel independent, although their parent / carer can be physically nearby.

For example, older children (regardless of age, gender or culture) desire to push boundaries and perform for their friends and strangers, a natural part of growing up and self-discovery. The project team recognised this and designed opportunities for incidental climbing on the exterior of the built structure, an area many children wish to reach but is traditionally quarantined from access. Rather than expending resources to prevent access, the team purposely facilitated it within the parameters of safety standards, resulting in an opportunity for older children to take on this next level experience.

A 3-metre-high balance beam at the northern end of the main play structure has become a real talking point and representative icon of the playspace. It presents an optional challenge to children and adventurous

parents / carers, regardless of age, gender, culture, ability or personality.

Two 10-year girls explained the new balance beam best at a recent site inspection: "We couldn't do it and were scared at first, but we kept coming back and practising and now we can do it easily!", they said. Simple but effective features like this beam allow for differing adventure appetites and provide opportunities to gain confidence and improve skill.

The benefit of creative and self-directed children's play is that it transcends any gender, cultural or ability stereotypes present in the social fabric of society. When children are able to be masters of their own play destiny, they can be whoever or whatever they choose. Exceptional playspace design recognises this principle and deliberately does not limit children to static experiences or set roles. This playspace is deliberately non-prescriptive. The horizontal byways (linking bridge-like structures) that overlap and intertwine within the hollows (raised built forms / towers) create endless possibilities of play, interaction, creativity and discovery. The ground plane is comprised of a series of explorative elements and unprescribed play potential, suitable to a range of users and abilities, linking in and around the canopy of structure above. There is no correct way to play in the overall play environment, instead, it offers infinite choice to the player.

Bradbury Park playspace is commended across Brisbane and further afield, promoting Council's commitment to creating exceptional recreational spaces and catering to residents' diverse needs and interests. It builds on Council's reputation for providing innovative, strategic and value-for-money facilities for residents and demonstrates how a public authority can drive innovation and creativity to deliver truly unique community infrastructure.

This playspace has challenged the very essence of what a playground can be and sets a new benchmark for both government and private industry, paving a new course for how exciting playspaces can become. ■

BRADBURY PARK SPACES

WITH URBAN POPULATIONS SET TO INCREASE, THE ROLE THAT PLAYGROUNDS PERFORM IN DAILY LIFE IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY VITAL

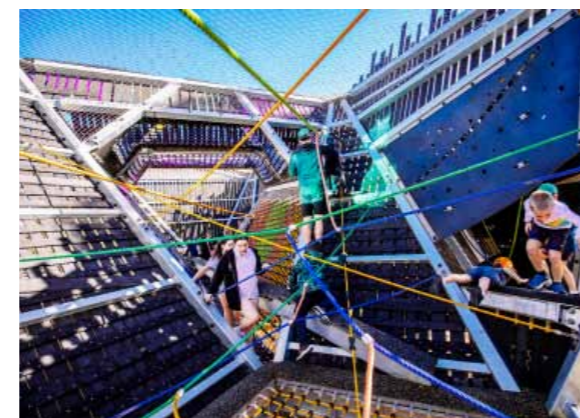
WORDS ANDREW ENSBEY, SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, MAJOR PROJECTS AND ASSET COORDINATION, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND SUSTAINABILITY BRANCH, CITY PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY DIVISION, BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL

With Brisbane's population projected to increase by 69 percent by 2036, and a growing trend for increased housing density, smaller land lots and inner-city living, the role that playgrounds perform in daily life is vital. To assist families, Brisbane City Council (Council) is diversifying its park network to provide families an affordable respite from busy lives, one that contributes positively to childhood development, creates positive family memories, and promotes social cohesion for generations to come.

Having access to a growing park network prevents children experiencing

social isolation. It creates an active and healthy lifestyle and positive choices, all of which create lasting short- and long-term health benefits. Skate parks and riding tracks are a great start, but typically only reach a particular audience. Carefully designed playspaces can capture a wider audience of varying ages and abilities.

Playspaces for younger children are common across Australian cities, however designing for older children and teenagers is considered far more difficult, and reflective of how few examples exist. Consequently, a recreation opportunity gap for older children exists, at ages



when they crave to explore and engage in activities that help to develop their identities and teach them to navigate the world with others.

Council has broken this ground before, with the delivery of Frew Park playground in Brisbane's inner west in 2014, so they knew it could be done. Aimed at older children and pushing the boundaries for greater play-based challenges, Frew Park playground was one of a kind in the country at the time. Council's project team sought to further this innovation. Bradbury Park provided the ideal location and context to do just that.



SUSTAINABLE SPORTS FIELD DESIGN IN NEW ZEALAND

BALANCING PERFORMANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

WORDS BLAIR CORNTHWAITE, SPORTS SURFACE DESIGN & MANAGEMENT (SSDM)

As environmental consciousness grows globally, sports field design and maintenance in New Zealand face increasing scrutiny. Sustainable sports field design is essential to support athletes, protect the environment, optimise resources and ensure long-term field viability. This article explores three critical areas of sustainable sports field design: appropriate turf selection, advanced irrigation technology, and planning for current and future uses.

TURF SELECTION: CHOOSING THE RIGHT GRASS FOR THE RIGHT CLIMATE AND USE

Selecting turf that suits local conditions and field use is critical in sports field design. New Zealand's diverse climate — subtropical in the north and temperate in the south — requires region- or event site-specific turf solutions.

Native Versus Introduced Grass Species

Native grass varieties adapt well to local conditions and require less water and fertiliser. However, their suitability for high-intensity sports use can be limited. Most turf systems use introduced species like ryegrass or couch grass. In low use areas, combining native and introduced grasses may balance durability and sustainability.

Improved Plant Genetics

Advances in plant genetics have produced turfgrass varieties that are both environmentally friendly and high-performing. These improved grasses are bred for drought tolerance, disease resistance, and faster recovery from wear. This reduces the need for chemical treatments and water. Sports field managers can use these innovative grasses to achieve sustainability without compromising quality.

Durability and Maintenance

High-use fields need turf that withstands frequent play without excessive damage. Wear-resistant, fast-growing varieties, like perennial ryegrass, are ideal for rugby and football fields. In warmer regions, couch or kikuyu grasses stabilise and reinforce sand profiles.

FIELD PROFILE: CHOOSING THE RIGHT SPORTS FIELD PROFILE

The choice of sports field profile — full sand, sand carpet, or soil — affects the performance and sustainability of the field. Each profile type offers distinct advantages and is suited to specific conditions and use requirements.

Full Sand Profile

A full sand profile consists entirely of sand, which provides excellent drainage and waterlogging resistance. This profile suits regions with high rainfall or fields that experience intense use. However, sand retains little water or nutrients, increasing irrigation and fertilisation needs. Sub-surface drip irrigation can improve efficiency. This profile also prevents earthworm castings.

Sand Carpet Profile

Sand carpet profiles use a thin layer of sand (typically 50-100mm) over a natural soil base with primary and secondary drains. This design balances drainage and nutrient retention. It is more cost-effective than a full sand profile and suits moderate-use fields. Sand carpet profiles have improved drainage compared to soil profiles; however, surface and slit drains may need to be replaced more often.

Soil Profile

Soil-based fields use natural soil as the primary growing medium. They are cost-effective and need less irrigation and fertilisation than sand-based systems. However, they are prone to

compaction and drain poorly, making them less suitable for high-use or wet-weather conditions. Soil profiles are best for low-use fields or areas with limited maintenance resources.

IRRIGATION TECHNOLOGY: EFFICIENT WATER USE

Water is critical for maintaining sports fields, especially during New Zealand's dry summer months (sometimes!). Advanced irrigation technologies can significantly reduce water consumption while ensuring optimal turf health.

Smart Irrigation Systems & Internet of Things (IoT) Integration

Smart irrigation systems with soil moisture sensors and weather-based controllers deliver water precisely when and where it is needed. These systems adjust watering schedules in real-time, minimising waste and preventing overwatering. IoT-enabled irrigation systems are revolutionising water management through remote monitoring and control capabilities. With IoT sensors installed throughout the field, managers can access real-time data on soil moisture, temperature, and weather conditions through mobile apps or dashboards. This enables quick, informed decisions and rapid response to changing conditions, further optimising water use.

Rainwater Harvesting and Reuse

Rainwater harvesting systems can provide sustainable irrigation water for sports fields. Collected rainwater stored in underground tanks or lakes and used for irrigation, reduces reliance on municipal water supplies. However, storing enough water for irrigation may be impractical as a single field can require 40m³ (40,000l) water in summer. Bore water use is encouraged if aquifers have sufficient capacity. summer. Bore water use is encouraged

Wastewater Reuse

Using treated wastewater (if available) offers an innovative and sustainable solution for sports fields. Properly treated wastewater provides a reliable supply, even during droughts, and can supply nutrients that benefit turf growth. Integrating this practice reduces dependence on potable water supplies and aligns with circular economy principles.

Drip Irrigation

Drip irrigation systems, which deliver water directly to the root zone, offer an efficient alternative to traditional sprinklers. These systems reduce evaporation and runoff, particularly in windy or hot conditions. These systems are typically used in parallel to traditional pop-up sprinklers but can offer greater efficiency in periods of high evaporation and can get the water to where is required (plant roots). dependence on potable water supplies and aligns with circular economy principles.

PLANNING FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE USES

Sustainable sports field design must

consider current needs but also the evolving requirements of the community and environment.

Multi-use Design

Designing fields for multiple sports and events maximises utility and reduces the need for new land development. For example, a field that accommodates rugby, football, and cricket serves diverse groups while minimising environmental disruption.

Climate Resilience

Sports fields must be designed to withstand climate challenges like prolonged drought, intense rainfall, and sea level rise. Features such as improved drainage systems, drought-tolerant turf, and shaded spectator areas increase resilience and user comfort.

Long-term Maintenance Planning

Sustainability extends beyond construction to include ongoing maintenance practices. Integrated pest management (IPM), using principles such as Minimum Levels for Sustainable Nutrition (MLSN) and organic fertilisation programmes promote soil health and reduce environmental

impacts, while maintaining field quality. Regular soil testing and decompaction promote healthy turf growth and help reduce resource inputs.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable sports field design in New Zealand represents an opportunity to combine sports turf performance with environmental stewardship. By selecting climate-/use-appropriate turf, leveraging advanced irrigation technologies, and incorporating cutting-edge innovations can become models of sustainability. As New Zealand continues to embrace eco-conscious practices, sustainable sports fields will play a vital role in fostering both community wellbeing and environmental resilience. ■

FIND OUT MORE

Blair Cornthwaite is the Senior Designer for Sports Surface Design & Management (SSDM). He has over 30 years practical experience in the golf and turf industry. For more information about SSDM, visit ssdm.co.nz

A DOSE OF NATURE

EACH TIME YOU VISIT A NATIONAL PARK YOU SAVE THE HEALTH BUDGET ALMOST \$100

WORDS PATRICK O'CONNOR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN NATURAL RESOURCE ECONOMICS, ADAM JAMES LOCH, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS & JOHN MACLEAN, LECTURER IN DATA SCIENCE, ALL UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

Visiting a national park is good for our health and wellbeing. But the benefits are not shared equally across the community. Often the people who need it most are least able to access a high-quality dose of nature. We wanted to quantify the benefit to the health system, in dollar terms. After all, health budgets are steadily growing while urban greenspaces with high biodiversity are often degraded and squeezed by development.

Our new research puts a dollar value on the health benefits of visits to national parks within reach of the city of Adelaide in South Australia. We estimate every visit saves the health budget almost A\$100 (\$96). Scaled up across the country, this means the

22-million daytrips to national parks in 2019 could shave more than \$2.1 billion off the nation's health bill every year. This estimate assumes visits and benefits are similar across the country. It can pay to look after nature.

HOW DID WE ESTIMATE THIS?

Past research shows spending time in nature may reduce stress, depression, anxiety, obesity, type II diabetes, heart disease and lung disease. The health benefits of access to greenspace are often cited to support the conservation of biodiversity, particularly in cities. But it's hard to calculate the economic value of these benefits. There's a lack of data on the number of people who benefit, and it's difficult to estimate how big



the benefit is. For instance, how do you calculate the "dosage" of urban greenspace as a health treatment and measure the amount of health gained from a given dose?

THE METHOD

To find out more, we examined the health benefits of access to nature in 20 national parks within 60 kilometres of central Adelaide over the 2018–19 financial year.

To work out how many people visited each park, and how far they travelled to get there, we used deidentified mobile phone ping data. A ping is what happens when one of the apps on your phone sends a message to the nearest phone tower to check for updates. We obtained app



Worm Bay, Peterborough, Victoria, Port Campbell National Park

LEISURE PLANNING: BEYOND SYSTEMATIC ADHOCRACY

WORDS DR JOHN TOWER, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

There have been several recent articles and publications discussing approaches to leisure planning (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 2024; Marriott 2023; Noesgaard, 2024; Veal & Piracha 2022, & 2023). Some of these articles have been scholarly peer review manuscripts and others are based on a rehash of old ideas (eg. standards-based planning approaches). It is not the intention to review and critique these articles, but instead to use them as a basis for reminding park and leisure planners about the importance of adopting a leisure planning model to guide the planning process.

for the plan's implementation. Adoption of a formalised leisure planning model is likely to lead to more effective outcomes.

LEISURE PLANNING PHASES

A review of recent leisure planning books was used to create a leisure planning typology to guide how leisure planning should be approached. An effective leisure planning process has four phases: Establish the planning context, Data collection, Write the plan, Implementation. Table 1 provides the explanation of these phases.

PHASE	EXPLANATION
Establish the planning context	Set the scene for the planning process by establishing what is to be achieved, stakeholder engagement and resources.
Data collection	Gather data from existing sources and conduct research to inform decisions on plan development.
Write the plan	Draw on the data collection sources to prepare a draft of the plan.
Implementation	Plan needs to be adopted for implementation.

LEISURE PLANNING COMPONENTS

The Table 1 leisure planning phases have several components to consider when managing a leisure planning process. Table 2 provides a list of the phases and components in a leisure planning process. More details about each component are available from McDonald, Hanlon & Tower (2024).

ping data for each of the 20 national parks, which gave us the result of 1.45 million visitors over the 2018–19 year.

We combined the ping data with information from a survey of more than 1,000 park visitors about attitudes towards and use of South Australian parks. It was also combined with general Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data on South Australia's population health. We then estimated a health benefit from access to parks for citizens across various socioeconomic groups.

To work this out, we compared self-reported health rating data from people who did or did not visit these parks. This showed people who visit parks are much more likely to report their health as "very good" or "excellent" compared to those who don't. We also looked at the shifts in health status for different socioeconomic groups.

We were able to control for the differences in underlying health of the people who answered the survey. This gave us a result: the difference in positive self-reported health between park visitors and those who don't visit was between two to five percent. We then used 2018–19 data on the cost of treating ten categories of major long-term chronic disease (eg. diabetes, arthritis, cancer) to estimate savings to the health budget.

HOW MUCH GOOD DOES A VISIT DO?

We analysed the health benefits of more than 1.45 million visits to national parks during the course of our study. We found access to these greenspaces could be worth \$140 million a year in reduced healthcare

costs. This is equivalent to around four percent of the total South Australian healthcare budget. Dividing \$140 million by 1,453,271 visits works out to \$96 per visit.

Access to nature is not equal. We found people living in lower socioeconomic areas have to travel about three times as far to visit a national park than people in higher socioeconomic areas. As a result, people from lower socioeconomic areas tend to make fewer visits to national parks. We found the number of visits for people from these areas was about 20 percent of the number of visits from people in higher socioeconomic areas.

This means the share of health benefits flowing to people in relatively disadvantaged areas is much lower. Health problems can have a greater financial impact for relatively socioeconomically disadvantaged people. So, this group stands to benefit most from increasing access to nature, with greater potential savings for the health budget.

SPENDING ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In total, Australia spent around \$241.3 billion on health goods and services in 2021–22. That's about \$9,365 per person, on average. Health costs such as hospital spending continue to grow. Commonwealth public hospital spending alone is expected to grow by \$2 billion a year.

At the same time, spending on protecting nature makes up less than 0.1 percent of the Commonwealth budget and falls short of what Australians want. Almost all Australians (97 percent) want

more action to prevent extinctions and more public investment to protect the environment and natural places (72 percent).

Our research suggests making nature more accessible by restoring urban biodiversity and increasing access to our protected areas can be a win for people, governments and the budget.

HEALTH BENEFITS FOR ALL

To fully realise and share these benefits, we need better integrated budgets that recognise how the natural world benefits our health and the broader economy. This requires being able to measure nature and our use of it in ways we have not been able to before.

Our research has attracted interest from policymakers in the recreation and wellbeing sectors. These sectors are becoming more prominent at the national level, as well as in South Australia, when it comes to valuing national parks and wildlife services.

As we come to better understand the relationships between contact with nature and health outcomes, we stand a greater chance of investing well, and equitably, so everyone can benefit from improved physical and mental health. ■

RESEARCH REPORT

Find the full report, [Increased Monetary Equity And Health Wellbeing Benefits For Marginal Urban Socioeconomic Groups From Access To Green Space at: sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866724003741?via%3Dihub#bib61&utm_source=nationaltribune&utm_medium=nationaltribune&utm_campaign=news](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1618866724003741?via%3Dihub#bib61&utm_source=nationaltribune&utm_medium=nationaltribune&utm_campaign=news)

REFERENCES

- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. (2024). Guide for Open Space Strategies (Draft). Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. Government of Victoria, Melbourne Australia.
- Marriott, K. (1980). Traditional approaches to urban recreation planning. In D. Mercer and E. Hamilton-Smith (Eds.), *Recreation planning and social change in urban Australia*. (pp. 113-123). Sorrett Publishing Pty Ltd.
- Marriott, K; Tower, J & McDonald, K. (2021). *Community Leisure and Recreation Planning*. London: Routledge.
- Marriott, K. (2023). A J Veal & Awais Piracha: meeting the need for a rational basis for open space and recreation planning in new high density residential areas: the Recreational Activity Benchmark model, *Australian Planner*, 2022. A rebuttal. *Australian Planner*, 59(3), 234–240. doi.org/10.1080/0729368.2.2023.2258238
- McDonald, K; Hanlon, C; & Tower, J. (2024). Leisure planning process: systematic adhocacy. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 1–16. doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2024.2420064
- Noesgaard, J. (2024). Ensuring future populations have access to adequate open space, *SGS Economics and Planning presentation at 2024 Parks and Leisure Australia Conference*, Brisbane Australia
- Veal, A J, & Piracha, A. (2022). Meeting the need for a rational basis for open space and recreation planning in new high density residential areas: the Recreational Activity Benchmark model. *Australian Planner*, 58(1–2), 63–68. doi.org/10.1080/07293682.022.2116062
- Veal, A J & Piracha, A. (2023). Planning for open space and recreation in new high-density areas: a reply to Marriott. *Australian Planner*, 59(3), 241–244. doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2023.291043

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A key component throughout the leisure planning process requires community engagement through all four phases. The engagement needs to include external stakeholders such as representatives of organisations aligned with leisure experience delivery; and internal stakeholders who can contribute to all aspects of the leisure plan. Effective engagement with community stakeholders will facilitate a positive relationship that will contribute to a plan that best reflects a community's needs and wants, and leads to support and resources for the plan's implementation.

CONCLUSION

Leisure planning is a complex process that can be more effectively managed when leisure planners adopt an approach based on an established model. Experience has shown that

an adoption of the leisure planning phases and components (Tables 1 and 2) achieves outstanding results. A leisure planning model will guide leisure planning projects and contribute to a community's most effective leisure experiences. compaction and drain poorly, making them less suitable for high-use or wet-weather conditions. Soil profiles are best for low-use fields or areas with limited maintenance resources. ■

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to Dr Ken Marriott for his feedback on an earlier draft of this article. Comments and questions are welcome about the leisure planning process. Contact Dr John Tower at john.tower@vu.edu.au for more info.



PHASE	EXPLANATION
Establish the planning context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan's mission, goals and objectives — Identify what the leisure plan is trying to achieve within the wider community context. Community engagement — establish systems to gain all organisation and community stakeholders' input. Governance — establish systems to guide the decision-making process. Costs / budget — set the budget for the planning process. Plan the process — document how the planning process will proceed. Participation targets — document the levels of leisure participation to be achieved in the plan.
Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement — collect insights from stakeholders to gain data and help interpret other data insights. Community profile — document community demographics and compare data to region, state or another relevant locality. Existing reports — review other relevant reports, e.g., transport, social, and specific population policies, that may impact on the plan. Existing conditions — document current status of leisure programs, facilities and services. Participation levels — document leisure participation data trends. Community leisure needs — conduct community consultations to identify leisure aspirations. Interim findings — share data collection reports with stakeholders to gain their insights.
Write the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate collected data — draw on collected data to identify insights from the data collection phase. Draft plan — prepare the draft plan to document the planning process, collected data, and set a plan with actions, timeframes, budget, responsibilities and performance monitoring approach. Community engagement — gain insights from stakeholders to confirm data analysis and response from draft plan.
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the plan — get the plan formally adopted by relevant planning authority and stakeholders. Monitor and evaluate the plan — establish systems to continuously gather and report data about the plan's implementation. Assess outputs and outcomes. Community engagement — communicate with stakeholders and seek feedback about the plan's adoption and implementation.

MAKING GOOD TURF GREAT
visit syngentaturf.com.au

Always refer to product label. Syngenta Australia Pty Ltd, Level 1, 2 Lyonpark Road, Macquarie Park NSW 2113. ABN 23 002 833 717. ®Registered trademark of a Syngenta Group Company. ™Trademark of a Syngenta Group Company. All products written in uppercase are registered trademarks of a Syngenta Group Company. ©Syngenta 2023. AD 23-502.

Primo Maxx II
Turf growth regulator

syngenta.

MAXIMISING THE COMMUNITY BENEFITS OF GOLF
REPORT & DASHBOARD IS NOW AVAILABLE!

SCAN HERE FOR THE REPORT & DASHBOARD

GENERATE YOUR VENUES COMMUNITY BENEFIT DATA NOW

“Inspiring golf venues to identify and act on infrastructure, programmatic and operating changes to enhance their offering and extend their community value.”

AUSTRALIAN GOLF | PGA | GOLF AUSTRALIA | WPGA TOUR | YAGIC | GMA | ASGA | SAGCA



Images Susan T Rodriguez Architecture & Design

DESIGNED TO DISAPPEAR

CENTRAL PARK IS GETTING A NEW RECREATION CENTRE

WORDS DIANA BUDDS, A NEW YORK-BASED WRITER

Next year, when the new Davis Centre on the north end of Central Park opens, visitors to the area might be standing right on top of its roof and not even know it. That's because the building is tucked into a hillside adjacent to the Harlem Meer, a tranquil manmade lake where birders try to scope out great blue herons and egrets, anglers try to catch bass, and people come simply to relax.

The recreation centre, which will include a swimming pool in summer, ice skating rink in winter and public restrooms open year-round, is replacing the Lasker Rink and Pool, a bulky 1960s concrete facility with a classic mid-century accordion roof (like the one over the outfield seats in Dodger Stadium). While the old building screamed, the new one will whisper.

"It's bringing more park into the experience of being in Central Park," says Elizabeth W Smith, president and CEO of the Central Park Conservancy, the private nonprofit organisation that has managed the greenspace since 1980.

The Davis Centre's design will feature bird-safe floor-to-ceiling windows, walls made from Adirondack stone and deep green tiles. It is undoubtedly topographical in nature. A boardwalk will traverse marsh plantings along the edge of the water, and a living roof will be planted with trees, grasses and shrubs and have a walking path with park benches, sited so that when you look over the balustrade, you won't see building at all, just skaters or swimmers and sunbathers below.

"Really, the building gets consumed in the landscape," says architect Susan Rodriguez. "It's an attitude that really sees architecture, design and landscape as a framing experience versus being about an object."

A LANDSCAPE-FIRST APPROACH

The new generation of park buildings have been deferential to the landscape around them. The LeFrak Centre at Lakeside in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, a covered ice and roller-skating rink

completed in 2013, is designed to blend into its site. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden Visitor Centre, which opened in 2012, incorporates a striking green roof comprised of grasses, perennials and bulbs that eases the transition between the city outside and garden landscape within. And just last month, the Frederic Church Centre for Art and Landscape opened at the Olana State Historic Site near Hudson, New York, as a low-slung, mass-timber building that is not meant to be visible in the state park's viewsheds.

The Davis Centre, however, takes this approach further, to the point where its architecture practically disappears. The point isn't to conceal the building, explains Nolan, who has been leading landscape restoration and capital improvements in the park since 1989. It's to integrate the building into its landscape. "The bag or tarp over something calls more attention to it," he says. "We're not trying to hide it."

This technique is core to Central Park's origin story. Designed by

Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in mid-19th century, Central Park is comprised of wooded areas, meadows, gardens and bodies of water, plus scattered buildings, as per the initial sketches from 1857. Olmsted and Vaux had a strict philosophy: "Nature first, second and third, then architecture after a while," Vaux once said. This often results in a game of hide-and-reveal in the park's landscape, where pedestrian bridges cross over bridle paths and carriage roads, and meandering through the park can lead to lots of surprises, often in the form of folly.

In the 20th century, the relationship between architecture and landscape in the park began to change, especially around the northern end. In the 1940s, WPA-funded revitalisation efforts around the Harlem Meer shifted Olmsted and Vaux's vision of a space for passive recreation into more of an active one. The shoreline was paved and eventually metal picket fences went up around the water, too. Part of this work was to help provide more public amenities to the residents in Harlem. Fast-forward to the 1960s when Mayor John Lindsay commissioned the Lasker Rink and Pool — a feature that was emblematic of his administration's interest in remaking public space for people who had historically been excluded.

While the amenities were much-needed and well-used, the structure they were housed in changed the park's experience. "The facility was monumentally scaled," Nolan says. "It was using the park as a campus, a piece of land to construct something on." Viewing parks as campuses of facilities took hold in the post-war era and has continued to influence their design today.

BLENDING HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY USES OF

CENTRAL PARK

The Conservancy's approach to the park has been to restore Olmsted and Vaux's vision for a pastoral park while balancing contemporary uses. The old pool and rink were beloved features — despite being outdated, constantly flooding and in need of repair — and the neighbouring communities didn't want to lose a single lane of lap swimming in the new design.

So, Rodriguez, Nolan and their teams looked for inspiration in the way Olmsted and Vaux integrated architecture and landscape to design a solution. They found inspiration in places like Bethesda Terrace, a focal point that obscures a tiled arcade and bathrooms beneath it, and the transverse roads that cut across the park without blocking pedestrian flow. "It's the same when you're in Riverside Park [in Manhattan] where you don't even realise Amtrak is running underneath it," Rodriguez points out.

The solution became to essentially "thread the park over the facility," as John Doherty, an architect and partner at Mitchell Giurgola, describes. Now the building is tucked under one of Olmsted and Vaux's manmade hills and the walking paths around the building are better connected. Because of how it was sited, the Lasker Pool blocked off pedestrian access, making it hard to walk from east to west around the building, but the experience was far from the walk that Olmsted intended. Now, the view extends to the waterfront.

The pool itself has been redesigned to be more accessible, with a zero-entry edge. The recreation facilities, which were undersized per NYC Health Code, are now fully ADA-compliant. Once it opens in 2025, New Yorkers will also be able to use the area for more of the year. The Lasker pavilion was a public pool for around two months in the summer

and an ice-skating rink for about four months in the winter. The rest of the time it was closed. For the Davis Centre, the designers developed a new decking system that can go over the pool when it's not serving either of those functions, so that people can walk or lounge over the area. "That transition from pool to public green to rink makes it really three buildings in one," Rodriguez says.

The old Lasker Rink was built over a culvert, which interrupted the flow of water from the nearby ravine to the Harlem Meer. By shifting the new building to the side, the waterway is able to flow freely. This will be helpful when it rains since most of the water in Central Park makes its way to the Harlem Meer and eventually flows into the city's combined sewer overflow system. The redesign will mean that more water will be able to stay in the park. Additionally, the Conservancy is researching a way to pump water from the Meer to other reservoirs in the park to lower the level of the Harlem Meer in anticipation of rainwater.

What will be most notable with the redesigned centre, however, is a changed relationship between the people and the park. In the 1990s, the Conservancy began to renaturalise the edges of the Meer, removing all the concrete and steel fences. It has also been building elevated promenades around previously inaccessible areas of the waterfront so that pedestrians can stroll along the entire perimeter and experience uninterrupted nature.

Redesigning the pool and rink is the final piece of the project — what the Conservancy calls the capstone of 40 years of restoration to the park. "Underpinning this is the big idea of the park, which is that we as people are hardwired to connect with nature," Nolan says. "If our work goes unnoticed, then we've done a good job." ■



NATURE-BASED NEIGHBOURHOODS

ENABLING NATURE-BASED NEIGHBOURHOODS THROUGH POLICY IN ENGLAND

WORDS CELIA DAVIS, SENIOR PROJECTS & POLICY MANAGER, TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ASSOCIATION, UK & TESSA TRICKS, PROGRAMME LEAD, NATURE-BASED NEIGHBOURHOODS PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMME, WATES FAMILY ENTERPRISE TRUST, UK

Despite the much-evidenced benefits provided to people and nature by green spaces, there is a consensus from environmental organisations that more must be done to maintain, retrofit and increase the provision of urban greenspace in England. The Environment Act of 2021 set a new legislative framework for the environment following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. It includes positive ambition towards reversing nature's decline in what is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world through a suite of national targets to improve nature and the environment, including a target for everyone in the UK to live within a 15-minute walk of greenspace from their home — a clear recognition of the importance of green spaces to rural and urban communities.

However, the national legislation and policy aims are not translating to those working to deliver local urban greening projects and nature-based neighbourhoods, who face multiple barriers and are struggling to make them work in practice. This indicates a disconnect between national policy and ambition for nature and biodiversity and initiatives seeking to

enhance nature at a local level.

In Autumn 2024, the Town and Country Planning Association (a national charity in the UK working to challenge, inspire and support people to create healthy, sustainable and resilient places), partnered with the Wates Family Enterprise Trust (WFET) to bring together key stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector engaged in urban greening to consider this policy and practice disconnect. The key question posed to attendees of the policy sprint was: How can local nature-based projects be helped to contribute to delivering a healthier, greener, more resilient and more biodiverse country?

WFET's interest in this agenda stems from a recognition that urban nature has the potential to transform local ecosystems, economies and the health and wellbeing of all who live, work and play locally. Over the last five years, WFET has invested in communities and academic research to support connection with nature in urban spaces. However, they recognise that pace and scale of the change needed requires a coordinated cross-sector response that links top down with bottom-up action.

The policy sprint sought to explore some of the policy challenges documented through recent reports and

inquiries into greenspace provision in England. These include:

- Responsibilities for green spaces and parks are split across government departments, meaning there is limited direction and leadership from central government.
- Policies and targets for green infrastructure are ambitious, but there is limited guidance about how their delivery can support local priorities, particularly in urban areas.
- Policy tools developed to support local authorities recognise and improve green spaces are "either not statutory, not comprehensive enough or not sufficiently widespread in usage" to have significant impact.
- Government initiatives are not joined up and there is need for more clarity on how policy tools and strategies interconnect.
- The Environmental Improvement Plan sets out actions for improving nature but "it is not clear how actions and policies contribute individually and together to deliver significant improvement to the natural environment and to deliver specific targets and commitments."
- This also appears to be the case at a local level where, for example, there is a need for better integration between health and planning.
- There doesn't seem to be clear guidance or expectations about community engagement and consultation on green spaces at a local level.

At the policy sprint, participants were invited to map the existing policy framework for urban greenspace in England, to test whether there was a shared understanding of this, and whether it coherently supports the delivery of national environmental objectives. The event also provided

an opportunity to consider how national policy for urban greenspace could better enable and support local action to improve urban greening and create nature-based neighbourhoods.

During the policy mapping exercise, many potential policy levers for supporting the delivery of urban greening were identified across health, transport, sport, flood management, natural environment, planning and education. The challenge is that while these provide clear justification for urban greening (as a mechanism to deliver against a range of policy priorities), they tend to work in silos and there is no clear line of sight in how national environmental objectives translate to local interventions. Overall, this means that national policy for urban greening is characterised by fragmentation or disintegration. In short, there is no clear policy on urban greenspace in England. This is true at the national and local governmental levels.

A particular challenge at the local level appears to be that there is often no single source document that sets out the local strategy for urban greening. This is despite the fact that there are many policy tools with potential to provide this, including those promoted by national government such as green infrastructure strategies and Local Nature Recovery Strategies. One of the challenges is that these strategies are weakened in practice because they have limited weight and / or are poorly resourced. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new requirement at the regional tier of government and have the potential to promote multifunctional benefits of nature recovery. However, guidance currently promotes a narrow focus of these on improving habitats rather than wider multifunctional benefits, creating a risk they will be less impactful in urban areas.

Despite radical changes to the policy and legislative framework for environmental improvement in the UK, improvement in practice will not be achieved until persistent underlying challenges are addressed. These include policy fragmentation, lack of institutional leadership on key issues (such as parks and green spaces) and strained resources at local governmental level, which makes it hard for them to prioritise urban greening.

OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN POLICY FOR URBAN GREENING

There are various initiatives and policy commitments relating to the natural environment that could present exciting



opportunities for enhancing national policy on urban greening, such as:

- A Land Use Framework for England,
- a new requirement for local authorities to develop design codes, and
- the roll out of Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England.

Funded initiatives may also provide a meaningful step towards urban greening. A newly launched Nature Towns and Cities1 project will support 100 towns and cities' aims to make tangible improvements to access to nature and greenspace through funding and support for communities and local authorities.

However, the policy sprint indicated that for significant change to happen, nature-based neighbourhoods must be given more political drive and priority, both at national and local levels. This could, for example, be realised through a national mission to green towns and cities. National prioritisation could provide impetus for the funding necessary to embed urban greening across relevant policy areas. Led from the top, it could also drive action in local communities, as has happened in Paris where a Climate Action Plan has been championed by the city Mayor and demonstrated visible leadership to communities.

It's also clear that local government and communities are central to the success of wider environmental objectives, but this currently feels like an untapped and unsupported resource for meeting national targets. For example, trees planted by local communities are currently not counted towards national tree planting targets. Placing nature-based neighbourhoods as central to corporate priorities could lead to green infrastructure being seen as a crucial delivery tool to meet local priorities, rather than a burden. This may also help integrate green infrastructure across different departmental plans and strategies, including food, health and transport.

The policy sprint signalled the beginning of a collaborative effort between stakeholders to secure a more strategic and clear national policy framework to enable urban greening, and promote and harness the potential of local communities to deliver nature-based neighbourhoods in England. ■

MORE INFO

Further project information on the Nature Towns and Cities project is available at: naturetownsandcities.org.uk/

NEW GUIDELINES TO HELP MAKE SCHOOL RUNS HAPPIER, HEALTHIER AND GREENER

NEW GUIDANCE WILL HELP TO DESIGN ACTIVITY INTO OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REDUCE CONGESTION ON THE ROADS DURING SCHOOL RUN TIMES

WORDS UK DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT & ACTIVE TRAVEL ENGLAND

Millions more school runs across the country can now be transformed to be healthier, safer, greener and more active, thanks to new government guidelines published on 19 November 2024.

The guidance, published by Active Travel England and the Department for Transport, outlines how councils can better deliver school street schemes so that they work best for pupils and staff as well as local businesses and residents.

A School Street temporarily only allows motor traffic with a permit outside the school gates at pick up and drop off times. This creates a safer space for children and their families to walk, wheel, cycle or scoot to school, bringing a wealth of benefits to both school pupils and residents, including:

- Improved physical and mental health for schoolchildren.
- Reduced cases of dangerous driving, parking and turning outside schools during school run times.
- More children staying active by walking, wheeling or cycling to school, which in turn reduces traffic in the local area during school drop off and pick up periods.
- More opportunities for social interactions on the way to school, and independence for older pupils.
- A reduction in emissions in and around schools.

There are already hundreds of School Streets funded across the country, including more than 180

funded by the government's Active Travel Fund.

November's guidance also cites research and evidence from the Road Safety Trust, which shows these schemes increase active travel on the school run, are supported by most parents and residents in the nearby community, and do not cause significant road safety issues through traffic displacement.

It comes after recent research commissioned by ATE found that 85 percent of people in England support active travel and would like to do more, while data from charity Sustrans has previously found that 4 out of 5 children want to walk or cycle to school.

National Active Travel Commissioner Chris Boardman said: "The majority of kids have told us they want to walk, wheel, scoot and cycle to school. It's what they want, and it's what we want for them. It is vital that we give them the opportunity to bookend their day in the classroom with fresh air and exercise, helping them build healthy travel habits for life. Through our new School Streets guidance, we will be able to better design activity into our neighbourhoods and help make life happier and healthier for future generations, all while reducing congestion on the roads during school run times for residents and businesses. It's win-win for everyone."

Local Transport Minister Simon Lightwood said: "It's crucial that children are able to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits that come with walking, cycling or scooting to schools. Today's new School Streets guidance will help embed active travel at the

heart of our neighbourhoods, so that children, parents and local residents can all benefit from cleaner air, less congestion and healthier journeys to school."

Chris Boardman shared the School Streets guidance with a global audience at the COP29 climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, where he also outlined ATE's wider work helping councils to provide environmentally friendly active travel options for their communities, through targeted investment and expert training. The guidance provides an overview of:

- What School Streets are.
- The key steps and factors to consider when developing and implementing schemes.
- How School Streets fit within the wider context of enabling walking, wheeling and cycling to school.

The guidelines are aimed at local authorities in England, particularly authorities with limited experience of delivering School Streets. It may also be of interest to schools and local elected members. It has been developed by the Department for Transport and Active Travel England and is supported by the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care. ■

KEY POINTS

- New guidance from Active Travel England (ATE) and the Department for Transport will help councils deliver school streets that work for schools and local communities.
- Schemes restrict traffic outside schools during pick up and drop off times, reducing congestion, boosting safety and enabling more pupils to walk, wheel or cycle.
- National Active Travel Commissioner Chris Boardman launched the new guidance in November 2024 at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

MORE INFO

To find out more about the transport scheme, visit gov.uk/government/news/government-guidelines-to-make-school-runs-happier-healthier-and-greener

RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

This edition of Research Connections provides ten articles that have been assessed as being of value for the delivery of park and leisure experiences. The seven Australian articles explore issues related to inclusion, climate change, staff recruitment and tiny houses in parks. The three international articles discuss mental health, low-income programs and anti-racism.

AUSTRALIA

PRIORITY POPULATIONS' EXPERIENCES OF THE ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION OF RECREATION CENTRES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY (2024)

Authors Rivera, E; Smith, C & Hesketh, KD

Abstract Background: Although the health benefits of physical activity are well documented, certain priority populations are often disproportionately insufficiently active and at higher risk of poor health. Recreation centres have the potential to provide accessible and supportive environments for physical activity for all. However, little is known about priority populations' experiences of these venues and their views of how accessibility and inclusion can be optimised. This study aimed to gain in-depth insights of recreation centre experiences and potential strategies for improving inclusion and accessibility amongst priority populations (women, older adults, ethnic minorities, persons living with disabilities/additional needs, individuals identifying as LGBTQIA+, low socio-economic position). **Methods:** This qualitative study (2021–2022) involved 18 semi-structured individual interviews with adult priority population users of recreation centres (50% 65+ years, 61.2% female) in one Melbourne municipality. Participants were asked to discuss their positive and negative experiences at the centres and to identify strategies for enhancing accessibility and inclusion. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Content analysis was performed for data analysis. **Results:** While many participants had positive views of the facilities and programs at the centres, as they met their needs, they also had suggestions for improving

accessibility and inclusion. Similarly, most participants were happy with the communications, felt included, and perceived the culture positively. Those who did not feel included at the centres offered many potential strategies for changing the culture, modifying communications (eg. signage), and establishing partnerships for better access and inclusion. **Conclusions:** The present study adds to essential knowledge concerning priority populations' experiences of recreation centres. For recreation facilities that were generally perceived as having positive inclusion and accessibility, the findings nonetheless highlighted suggestions for further enhancement. These strategies may be useful more broadly for improving accessibility and inclusion, thereby promoting physical activity and ultimately health for all.

Publication BMC Public Health #24. Article number 205

Download doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17595-3

Cost FREE

AQUATIC FACILITY EMPLOYEE SHORTAGES: AN ANALYSIS OF SWIM INSTRUCTOR AND LIFEGUARD JOB ADVERTISEMENTS (2024)

Author Michael Butson

Abstract Purpose/ Rationale:

The aquatic industry continues to experience employee shortages and high level of turnover. Job advertisement content has shown to influence important recruitment outcomes such as, organisational attractiveness and candidates' intentions to apply. This article reveals key insights into the characteristics and effectiveness of swim instructor and lifeguard job advertisements. Additionally, employee demand trends. **Design/ Methodology/ Approach:** 992 Job advertisements were found for swim instructors and lifeguards across eight different websites. Guided by signalling theory and the instrumental-symbolic framework, a summative content analysis determined the characteristics and effectiveness of swim instructor and lifeguard job advertisements in Victoria, Australia. **Findings:** Findings suggest an imbalance between industry demand and labour

supply. Furthermore, advertisements lacked general information or "signals" related to explanations of the role and working conditions, pay rates, and employee incentives. **Practical Implications:** Particularly during a period of employee shortages, managers should consider providing more detailed information about employee roles, pay rate, or potential incentives. **Research Contribution:** The research details how job advertisements with inadequate information could be obstructing the recruitment process. This includes distancing potential employees and failing to fill employment vacancies. **Originality/ Value:** Research exists to explain turnover and turnover intention in the aquatics industry. Nevertheless, it is not understood if swim instructor and lifeguards job advertisements are perhaps hindering the recruitment process.

Publication Managing Sport and Leisure, 1–18

Download doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2024.2431720

Cost \$56 (USD)

EVENTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: A POLICY INTEGRATION STUDY (2024)

Authors Kennelly, M; Howes, M & Dedekorkut-Howes, A

Abstract Climate change poses unique challenges for the event industry, yet the industry and its key stakeholders have been slow to acknowledge the need to adapt. In Australia, local governments play an important role in event and climate change policy making. This research assessed local government event and climate policy integration in Queensland, Australia, as the state seeks to grow its visitor economy ahead of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Policies from seven local governments were analysed. We found no evidence of policy integration. While local governments envisioned using events for public engagement to increase climate literacy, the event industry appeared overlooked as a necessary site for adaptation. Yet opportunities to create connections between these misaligned policy domains were evident. Findings suggest local governments

can support event adaptation through mainstreaming of climate concerns across event-related policy areas, including economic development and community resilience.

Publication Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, 1–19

Download doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2024.2434880

Cost \$56 (USD)

CONNECTING BY WATER: AN AUSTRALIAN EXPLORATION OF MIDLIFE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN STRUCTURED SURFING LESSONS (2024)

Authors Barry, K; Every, D & Gerace, A

Abstract Structured surfing lessons are a popular choice for participation in water environments, or blue zones, for fitness, connection, and building individual strengths. This study explored Australian middle-aged women's perceptions and experiences of participation in a structured surfing programme, including positive aspects, barriers and enablers to participation, and wellbeing impacts. Thirty-four females, aged 40–66 years, completed an anonymous online survey consisting of open-ended questions. Reflexive Thematic Analysis generated five themes: surfing is simultaneously liberating, challenging, peaceful and a restorative activity; co-creating a sisterhood of waterwomen-in-the-making; the qualities of a safe space; beneath the surface lie hidden strengths; and wisdom through the teachings of the waves. The themes suggested that structured surfing lessons, when perceived as safe and appropriate to skill level, positively affected the overall wellbeing of participants, building confidence, relationships, and achievement. Findings contribute to a better understanding of ways to increase middle-aged women's participation in this activity.

Publication Annals of Leisure Research, 1–22

Download doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2024.2423713

Cost \$56 (USD)

RESIDENTIAL PARKS: A SOLUTION FOR SITING TINY HOUSES? (2025)

Author Bunce, D

Abstract There are no separate planning laws in Australia that allow tiny houses to be used as a principal place of residence without first obtaining council development approval. They are legislatively regarded as caravans and under existing state and territory Residential Park Acts tiny houses could be sited in residential parks but the supply side is insufficient. This article calls for flexible discretionary planning policies that would encourage development of residential parks for tiny houses and provide them with siting options. Many tiny house dwellers want to remain in the same place and not move on a regular basis. Residential parks and tiny houses could potentially enable some people at the lower end of the affordable housing and rental markets to obtain an affordable home in a community environment. The park lifestyle may also appeal to older home owners wishing to downsize and free-up larger homes. High house prices, rental costs and supply shortages will prevent some households from accessing traditional housing over their life's course. Residential parks could provide a different form of home ownership for people who may not otherwise be able to obtain it or, due to altered personal circumstances, obtain it a second time.

Publication Australian Planner, 1–12

Download doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2024.2447305

Cost \$56 (USD)

CONCEPT MAPPING PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE IMPACTS ON SPORT PARTICIPATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM COMMUNITY-LEVEL MANAGERS (2024)

Authors Dingle, G & Donaldson, A

Abstract Rationale: Community sport is an important setting for managing sport participation, yet few studies have investigated the impacts of climate change on sport. Even fewer studies have investigated climate impacts from the perspectives of sport managers at the grassroots level. The research aim was to understand how frontline community sport managers perceive

climate change impacts on their sports.

Methods: Concept Mapping (online) with managers at nineteen organisations delivering community sport situated across four Australian climate zones.

Findings: A five-cluster concept map was selected as the most appropriate representation of participants' sorting data: (1) Management & Planning Impacts, (2) Financial & Infrastructure Impacts, (3) Changes to Events, (4) Emotional & Social Impacts, and (5) Health & Safety Impacts. These clusters were grouped into three impact domains: Management & Infrastructure Impacts, Activity Impacts, and People Impacts. **Practical implications:** The five clusters of impacts shed new light on managing climate change complexity for community sport. The impact clusters can assist sport managers design interventions to reduce disruption to sport participation. Listening to the perspectives of frontline staff who deliver sport is essential for managing these impacts. **Research contribution:** A cluster map of perceived climate impacts provides a new framework for scholars investigating climate change impacts on sport.

Publication Managing Sport and Leisure, 1–21

Download doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2024.2412000

Cost FREE

YEARNING FOR CARE: AN EXAMINATION OF SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN GYMNASIUMS ON THE GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA (2024)

Authors Bhattacharya, D & Pavlidis, A

Abstract This article considers the ways in which South Asian women negotiate care through fitness cultures in gymnasiums. Drawing on contemporary literature at the intersections of geographies of care, cultures of fitness focussed on gymnasiums and intersectional feminist thinking, we examine the ways in which South Asian women engage in physical activities in gymnasiums in hyper-sexualized tourist cities such as the Gold Coast, in Southeast Queensland in Australia. In doing

so, the article explores the affective dimensions of engaging in physical activities for South Asian women and how these can be reimagined through momentary experiences of 'care'.

Using a post-humanist feminist lens, we employ in-depth interviews and observational research in exploring how race and gender are inter-implicated in South Asian women's experiences in gymnasiums.

Publication Annals of Leisure Research, 1–17

Download doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2024.2421801

Cost FREE

INTERNATIONAL

SUPPORTING RURAL LOW-INCOME FAMILIES: A MUNICIPAL RECREATION DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY CRISIS (2023)

Authors Oncescu, J; Fortune, M;

Fisher, L; Sweatman, M & Frigault, J

Abstract Recreation is an important resource that can support residents' capacity to cope with stress and deal with community crisis, such as a pandemic. However, rural low-income families often experience inequitable access to recreation provisions. COVID-19 pandemic forced municipal recreation departments across Canada to re-evaluate and adapt their provisions, of particular importance for rural low-income families. Through the lens of social liberalism, this study examined the role of a municipal recreation department's response to community crisis and the implications of its provisions on rural low-income mothers and their families' capacity to facilitate leisure during the pandemic. Through 29 interviews with low-income mothers and a focus group with the recreation department, we illuminate how provisions were designed and delivered to address income inequality, geographic isolation, social exclusion and childcare. Considering these findings, we discuss the department's approach to redesigning and delivering provisions and the implications to supporting low-income families' access to recreation.

Publication Annals of Leisure Research,

27(5), 681–702

Download doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2023.2250477

Cost \$56 (USD)

CREATING SAFE SPACES IN RECREATIONAL SPORT: A MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE (2024)

Author Jordan Sutcliffe

Introduction Recent research shows that youth sports in many countries, including Canada, often fall short in protecting participants from various forms of abuse (Kerr et al, 2020). To effectively tackle mental health issues in recreational sports, a system-wide approach that involves everyone from national sport organizations and government bodies to community clubs, regional governing bodies, and others such as athletes, parents, and coaches is needed. Unfortunately, the community sports sector, where fun and recreation should be the main focus, often lacks a unified, evidence-based strategy to promote mental health and well-being. Many sports organizations also report being under-resourced, under-trained, and unsure of how to implement even basic measures to ensure a safe and healthy environment for their participants (Whitley et al, 2018).

Publication Sport Information Resource Collection (SIRC), Canada.

Download sirc.ca/blog/creating-safe-spaces-in-recreational-sport-a-mental-health-perspective/

Cost FREE

SIMPLE RULES FOR CREATING AND SUSTAINING AN ANTI-RACIST SPORT AND EXERCISE ORGANISATION (2025)

Authors Fernandes, JFT; Brown, C;

Keith, NR; Miller, PW; Moghadam, S;

Strachan, L & Olusoga, P

Abstract The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020 incited a surge in anti-racism efforts across the world. Many organisations, including those related to sport and exercise, were quick to make their stances on racism clear. In efforts to promote anti-racism, new equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) groups were formed, while many individuals joined protests and took to social

media to raise awareness of the racism that Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) continue to face. In the sporting world, a significant burden and labour is placed on athletes of colour to make strides towards anti-racism. However, every individual working with the sport and exercise industry must act to condemn and eradicate racism. Sport and exercise organisations are in an opportune place to contribute to anti-racism efforts because of their wide reach, yet there is a need for clear advice on how to make change. Therefore, we provide commentary on 10 simple 'rules' that can support sport and exercise organisations in creating and sustaining an anti-racism.

Publication International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 1–11

Download doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2024.2446300

Cost \$56 (USD)

CALL FOR ARTICLE ABSTRACTS AND REPORTS

Abstracts of research projects and reports of interest to PLA members are always welcome. Please forward material or enquiries to PLA Advisory Research research@parksleisure.com.au

Have you completed a report that may be of interest to your Australian parks and leisure colleagues? You can share it via PLA's PaRC platform at parksleisure.com.au/library/

Please share your comments and suggestions about Research Connections so we can use the articles to better meet PLA member needs.

This edition was compiled by John Tower of PLA Advisory.

WORDS DR JOHN TOWER, PLA ADVISORY CHAIR

PLA Advisory continues its monthly meetings and a range of projects to improve the delivery of park and leisure experiences. This column provides an update on Advisory's projects.

BRISBANE STATEMENT

The 2024 Brisbane Conference Statement has been available since the National Conference in October 2024. The Statement can be used to guide PLA members, our organisations and political representatives on the importance of park and leisure experience delivery. We encourage PLA members to draw on the Brisbane Statement to guide and reinforce our strategic park and leisure initiatives. The full Brisbane Statement is available at parksleisure.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Brisbane-Statement_A4_Sep2024.pdf

ADVISORY ACTIVITIES

The Advisory team have been busy over recent months developing a range of projects and working to engage with PLA members through contributions at the mid-year regional conferences.

LinkedIn Presence

Advisory has recognised that LinkedIn is one of the best options to share information with PLA members and the wider park and leisure industry. Last year the Park and Recreation Collection (PaRC) established a LinkedIn presence and has gradually gained followers.

PaRC's LinkedIn posts share updates about contributions to the collection and commentary about the park and leisure industry. Join the conversation by following @Parks and Recreation Collection (PaRC) on LinkedIn.

Advisory has also explored options to use LinkedIn as a social media platform to raise issues and share comments among our community. We recognise there is potential for LinkedIn posts to reach a wide audience to share news about our industry. At the moment, we have decided to continue posting via individual LinkedIn accounts and @Parks & Leisure Australia.

Managing Park and Leisure Construction Cost Increases

This project is making steady progress

since the successful workshop at the 2024 National Conference. A team from Advisory have prepared a draft discussion paper that documents the input from the conference workshop. We also plan to deliver sessions at the NSW QLD and VicTas Regional Conferences. These state-based sessions will take a deeper dive into the practical application of strategies for optimising resources and improving operational efficiency.

Parks and Leisure Sector's Relationship with Higher Education

This project has been slowly progressing since the Advisory workshop at the 2023 National Conference. The working group have consulted with a wide range of stakeholders to provide explanations about collaboration opportunities and case studies to guide better collaboration. The main sections of the PLA and university collaboration resources are:

- Rational for collaboration
- Examples of arrangements and contracts for student placements
- Building a relationship between partners
- Risk management issues
- Costs and benefits of collaboration
- Establishing graduate positions
- Research collaboration
- Case studies

We have completed a list of relevant university contacts via a contribution from Australian and New Zealand Association of Leisure Studies (ANZALS) and Swinburne University. We are currently working with the PLA National Office to make the resources available via the PLA website. Advisory also plans to deliver sessions at the regional conferences to seek feedback from PLA members and university colleagues to guide better collaboration between the industry and universities.

Advocacy

We continue to focus on PLA's capacity to advocate for the value and status of the park and leisure industry. We recognise our capacity to contribute to many public policy initiatives across the park and leisure sector.

We were pleased to note that Advisory's submission to the Australian

Sports Commission (ASC) Act Review had an impact, with a number of our recommendations being acknowledged in the consultation summary. It will be interesting to monitor the impact of the ASC Act Review Consultation.

Research Connections

The Advisory team continue to review recent research journal articles to share in the Research Connections section of the Journal. We try to feature as many Australian research articles as possible and are happy to include relevant research reports that may be of interest to our members. PLA members are invited to share any relevant research by sending an email to research@parksleisure.com.au or email John Tower directly at john.tower@vu.edu.au

The production of the Research Connections column has been going for many years. We would value any member feedback regarding how you may have used the column's content to inform your park and leisure experience delivery, email research@parksleisure.com.au to share your feedback.

SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS

PLA members are invited to share your suggestions and comments about the important issues in the park and leisure industry. Advisory exists to prepare position papers, initiate research and guide professional training and development. The Advisory team do this by focusing on advocacy, collaboration and sharing knowledge. Members' comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Are you interested in joining the PLA Advisory team? Please contact John Tower @ john.tower@vu.edu.au to express your interest.

I want to thank Advisory members who contribute to our activities. The Advisory team is Anand Pillay, Stephanie McCallum, Neal Ames, Lucilla Marshall, Wendy Holland, Cathy Kiss, John Senior, Laura Shaw and John Tower (Advisory Chair). Everyone on the Advisory team shares a commitment to our industry and volunteer our time to help PLA to achieve its mission. ■

UPCOMING COURSES & EVENTS

PLA EVENTS

PLA NSW/ACT & PLA QLD REGION CONFERENCE

7-8 May
Newcastle City Hall,
Newcastle, New South Wales
parksleisure.com.au/event/2025conference_nswactqld/

PLA VIC/TAS REGION CONFERENCE

20-21 May
Centrepiece Melbourne Park,
Melbourne, Victoria
parksleisure.com.au/event/pla-vic-tas-2025-region-conference/

PLA SA/NT REGION CONFERENCE

30 May
U City Function Centre,
Adelaide, South Australia
parksleisure.com.au/event/pla-sa-nt-region-conference-awards/

AUSTRALIA

PARKS WEEK 2025

3-10 March
Australia and New Zealand
parksleisure.com.au/home-parks-week/

NATIONAL SPORTS & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CONVENTION 2025

25-26 June
Melbourne Convention and
Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Victoria
nationalsportsconvention.com.au/

NEW ZEALAND

GREEN PAVLOVA 2025

20-22 May
Due Drops Event Centre,
Manukau, Auckland
recreationaotearoa.glueup.com/event/green-pavlova-2025-126611/

NZ CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA CONFERENCE 2025

20-22 May
Due Drops Event Centre,
Manukau, Auckland
recreationaotearoa.glueup.com/event/nz-cemeteries-and-crematoria-conference-2025-126642/

WAVES CONFERENCE 2025

20-22 August
Te Pae Christchurch Convention
Centre, Christchurch, Canterbury
recreationaotearoa.glueup.com/event/waves-conference-2025-126647/

BOOK REVIEW

WENDY SIMPSON, HUMAN KINETICS AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

INTRODUCTION TO ADAPTIVE SPORT AND RECREATION

By Robin Hardin (Editor) & Joshua R Pate (Editor)

This comprehensive textbook offers a broad exploration of sport and recreation for people with disabilities within the framework of sport management.

ISBN 9781718214538

Published 2024

MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE (3E)

By Bess H Marcus & Dori Pekmezi

A practical handbook for health and fitness professionals who work in planning, developing, implementing, physical activity programs, including examples of inclusive, low-cost activities that can be performed in a variety of settings.

ISBN 9781718217003

Published 2024

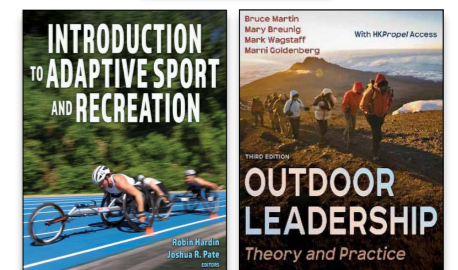
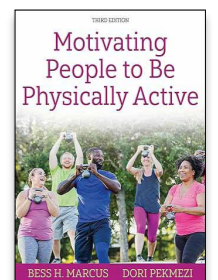
OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP: THEORY AND PRACTICE (3E)

By Bruce Martin, Mary Breunig, Mark Wagstaff & Marni Goldenberg

Outdoor Leadership will effectively guide students' learning in leadership in outdoor and adventure settings. This resource will help aspiring outdoor leaders plan safe, enjoyable and ecologically responsible expeditions; acquire and showcase their leadership abilities; and develop knowledge and expertise.

ISBN 9781718214293

Published 2024



Human Kinetics (HK) leads the world in providing information related to physical activity. That information takes many forms: textbooks, books for consumers, instructor support materials, journals, online courses, video, digital products and more. Through its relationship with HK, PLA and Recreation Aotearoa are able to offer discounted costs to members.

HK have set up a new page on its distributor's website (Woodslane) for Parks & Leisure Journal readers. You can access it via woodslanehealth.com.au/pages/parks-leisure-australia

JOIN US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK
Join our Facebook community to:

- Get the best bits of the quarterly **Australasian Parks & Leisure** journal
- See photos of regional and national award winners and guests
- Read about topical industry news
- Stay abreast of national conference activity before, during and after the conference
- Discover what seminars and events are going on in your area



TWITTER
Follow @ParksLeisureAus to:

- Receive news and live updates from official PLA events
- Access quick, up-to-the-minute conference news
- Speak one-on-one to managers in your PLA community about your organisation's projects



LINKEDIN
Follow Parks & Leisure Australia to:

- Discover and network with like-minded people in your industry
- Unearth industry seminars and events going on in your area
- Read hand-picked articles from the quarterly **Australasian Parks & Leisure** journal that matter to you, your organisation and your industry



Take nature-inspired play to new heights and delight players of all ages with the Treehouse - an interactive climbing structure jam-packed with play elements.



SUBSCRIBE

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION
(4 issues) print OR digital

Digital only \$40 AUD
Print only (Aust) \$45 AUD
Print only (Int) \$55 AUD

**All prices exclude GST*

To subscribe or submit an article visit
parksleisure.com.au or
call +618 8332 0130



twitter.com/ParksLeisureAus

facebook.com/parksandleisureaustralia