

AUSTRALASIAN

parks

& leisure

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Recreation & Physical Activity



**THE SQUEEZE ON
RECREATION FUNDING**

**THE NEXT GENERATION
OF WOMEN LEADERS IN SPORT**

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**PARKS MANAGEMENT:
What's Changed Over the Years**

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JOHN SENIOR

This season's edition of the Journal offers quite a variety of topics for our readers – even more so than usual! Articles in this issue range from an eye-catching reconstruction of St Kilda

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Pier in Melbourne into a major tourist destination, a penguin refuge and an amazing architectural design, through to the planning for a new regional park in the northern outskirts of Melbourne. A discussion paper from an Aotearoa Masters Student on nature-based recreation for the disabled community sparks some debate, while a combined article covering new parks in Armadale in Western Australia and Griffith in the Riverina region of New South Wales is an interesting prospect.

In addition, we have a significant contribution from a long-standing professional on his reflections on parks and protected area management based on his professional experience – making for an interesting reading reflecting on the changes that have occurred over several

decades. Finally, there is summary of the recently released Urban Greening Strategy for Metro Adelaide.

From overseas a series of contrasting articles present a historic article on the famous Maria Luisa Park in Seville (which I have had the great pleasure of visiting) and two concerning reports from the UK and Canada about the growing decline in children's outdoor play opportunities, both at school and in public spaces. Could they happen here? Are they already happening here?

I hope you enjoy the Winter 2025 Journal offerings and find them valuable to your own work in this sector.

John Senior
Editorial Coordinator



KRISTIN DAVIES

As the cooler months settle in, there is nothing warmer than the energy that comes from gathering, sharing stories and sparking ideas with peers across our incredible industry.

Across May and June, Parks and Leisure Australia's Regions have been bringing professionals together at their annual conferences. Dynamic celebrations of place-based innovation, shared purpose and the people who bring our parks, places, spaces and communities to life. These events are more than calendar highlights, they are a vital expression of who we are as a sector: collaborative, future-focused and united by a drive to create better outcomes for all.

In an increasingly complex world, coming together matters more than

FROM THE PLA PRESIDENT

ever. Conferences offer space to pause, reconnect and gain fresh perspectives. They remind us that we are not working in isolation but as part of a thriving national movement built on knowledge-sharing, mutual respect and a deep commitment to community wellbeing. They build our collective capacity, inspire leadership at every level and spark the cross-sector conversations that lead to real change and progress.

This is something we have long understood. In fact, did you know Parks and Leisure Australia has delivered industry conferences since 1927? The first was held in Ballarat, Victoria. And, only five have been missed due to major global events such as conflict and pandemics (1942, 1943, 1950, 2020 and 2021). That legacy speaks volumes about the strength, resilience and enduring relevance of our community, as well as the importance of connection.

As we look to the horizon, I am thrilled to announce that the 2025 National Parks and Leisure Conference will be held in Hobart, Tasmania, from 9–12 November. Under the theme *Inspired by the Past: Visions for the Future*, this event invites us to honour our foundations while boldly exploring new possibilities.

Tasmania with its unique blend of natural wonder, cultural depth

and progressive thinking offers the perfect backdrop to reflect, reimagine and reconnect. It's also the ideal place to launch a truly historic moment: the beginning of Parks and Leisure Australia's 100-year anniversary celebrations. A century of shaping the provision, performance and experiences that define the liveability of our places, spaces and communities.

This isn't just another conference, it's the start of a centenary journey that celebrates our shared legacy, recognises the leaders and changemakers among us and charts our course for the next century of creating places that enrich lives. I warmly invite you to be part of it; a part of making history.

Whether you're a long-time member or new to the profession, public or private, from all corners of our sector and those who are defining the future of parks, sport, leisure and community wellbeing, the power of coming together has never been more valuable. Together, we learn more, grow faster and lead stronger.

I look forward to welcoming you to Tasmania where history and future meet to inspire greatness.

Kristin Davies
National President, Parks & Leisure Australia

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BOBBY CLARK-HEU & KIRSTY KNOWLES

Matariki, the Māori New Year, will be celebrated on 20 June. It's a time to reflect on the past, celebrate the present and plan for the future. This Matariki, we'll begin the next phase of our organisational journey with the launch of our refreshed strategy, Te Whai Oranga 2025–2030. Given the occasion, it's worth reflecting on where it all began.

Recreation Aotearoa was established in 1992 (New Zealand Recreation Association, as it was known then). It formed from a merger of its antecedent organisations: the NZ Association of Swimming Pool Managers, NZ Parks and Recreation Administrators, and the Recreation Association of New Zealand. Kotahitanga (unity) has always been at our

FROM THE RECREATION AOTEAROA CO-CHAIRS

heart. In this instance, it was unifying the industry for collective impact.

In the mid-2010s, we welcomed the outdoors sector. More recently, we incorporated the New Zealand Cemeteries and Crematoria Collective. Recreation Aotearoa works across all parts of New Zealand's broad and diverse recreation industry. We are proud to be an inclusive place for everyone working in recreation.

It's worth pausing here to celebrate the present — te pae watu — something we often forget to do. Earlier this year, we ran our annual member survey. Delivering value for our members matters to us. We're pleased to report that year-on-year satisfaction scores have increased across all our categories of member service. Particularly pleasing was significant increases in satisfaction with our advocacy work for the industry, disability and inclusion guidance, and support to build sector cultural capability.

Recently, the Recreation Aotearoa Board met with our Regional Advisory Group. This annual face-to-face gathering provides the

Board an opportunity to understand the aspirations and challenges for our regions and to share updates on our work. The focus of this meeting was to seek feedback on the new iteration of our strategic plan.

Te Whai Oranga 2025-2030 is a resetting of our sails for the next phase of our journey together. While we remain steadfast in our pursuit of our vision and long-term aspirations, our focus now shifts outwards. Much like the thinking that drove the formation of Recreation Aotearoa 33 years ago, our refreshed strategy invites the many and diverse people and organisations that make up our industry to voyage together as a fleet of waka hourua (ocean-going canoes).

In closing, we'd like to extend our gratitude to you, our valued members, for your ongoing commitment to the recreation industry and the pursuit of wellbeing. We look forward to navigating the future alongside you. Ngā mihi o Matariki.

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



SARAH MURRAY

Welcome to the winter edition of the Australasian Parks & Leisure Journal. As I write, the team at Recreation Aotearoa is shifting into conference mode. Our annual programme of events begins in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland in May with Green Pavlova and the biennial New Zealand Cemeteries & Crematoria Conference.

This gathering of our parks, play, open space, cemeteries and crematoria members celebrates the strength of our combined industries and showcases the best and latest thinking. The annual Young Amenity Horticulturalist Competition will once again run concurrently, with the winner announced at the Parks & Cemeteries Awards Dinner. This is one of my favourite nights of the year. I'm looking forward to connecting with our members and celebrating our best and brightest.

Hot on the heels of this is the National

FROM THE RECREATION AOTEAROA CEO

Outdoors Hui, marking a return to a national gathering of Outdoors Leaders, after several years of smaller regional forums. We made this change in response to feedback from our Outdoors members and look forward to coming together in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington in June. With changes to conservation legislation underway, along with new adventure activity safety guidance and the ongoing reform of vocational education, we have much to discuss.

August takes us to Ōtautahi Christchurch for Waves and a much-anticipated visit to Parakiore, New Zealand's newest and largest sport and recreation facility. This year's focus is on excellence in aquatics, building on the industry's strong foundations to move from good to great. We'll explore how we keep things simple while having courage to innovate and drive continuous improvement. This is no easy task in a time of ongoing financial pressures, but it's one we must rise to if we are to continue to serve our communities well.

Our event season closes with our pan-industry conference, the New Zealand Recreation Leaders' Summit. A reimagined approach to our annual National Recreation Conference, this must-attend event for

sector leaders, and aspiring leaders, will take place in Ōtautahi on 20 November. We've consulted with members and stakeholders to shape this refreshed approach and we're excited to move into a new phase for this iconic event. Watch out for information on what to expect, including masterclasses and the annual Recreation Awards.

Outside of conferences and events, we continue to focus on driving excellence in recreation, advocating for the value and interests of our industry and working together for collective impact. In March, we released New Zealand's first ever Outdoor Accessibility Design Guidelines. These have already had a huge impact and, over time, will transform accessibility in the outdoors. We're also updating the Aquatic Facility Guidelines, Mountain Bike Trail Design Guidelines, and developing guidance on playspace design and gender-neutral facilities.

As always, a huge mihi (thank you) to all our members, supporters and partners. We're proud to be your industry association and support the work you do to improve wellbeing through recreation.

Sarah Murray
Recreation Aotearoa, Chief Executive

URBAN GREENING STRATEGY FOR METRO ADELAIDE

WORDS GREEN ADELAIDE



Metropolitan Adelaide has its first Urban Greening Strategy. Designed to increase tree coverage, cool the city and boost biodiversity across metropolitan Adelaide, it is a practical roadmap for growing our tree canopy, cooling our local neighbourhoods and boosting urban biodiversity.

An investment in urban greening is an investment in meeting the challenges of climate change, urban development, biodiversity loss and community health and wellbeing.

The Urban Greening Strategy provides a mechanism for government and non-government partners to work together to achieve more, by enabling projects that share the load and bridge the gaps between jurisdictions. The strategy identifies priority actions that:

- Fill known gaps or scale up what is already working well.
- Unlock metropolitan-wide benefits.
- Harness cross-sector collaboration and/or co-investment.

The six priority areas for action, include:

- 1. Cooler, greener and healthier development** | Facilitating good design outcomes for development that protect existing trees and provide sufficient space for new urban greening.
- 2. Government leading by example** | The role of state and local government in driving better greening outcomes and to show leadership in this space through trialling new ideas, commissioning research and implementing innovative solutions for greening the land that they own and manage.
- 3. Building nature back in** | Protecting and improving biodiversity in urban environments both on public and private land.
- 4. Future-proofing our urban forests** | Making sure our urban greenery is resilient to the impacts of climate change through increasing diversity of plantings, diversity within species and ensuring adequate water supply.
- 5. Improving greening equity** | Making sure that all residents

across metropolitan Adelaide have access to urban greenspaces and the benefits they provide from a cooling, productivity and health and wellbeing perspective.

- 6. Scaling up impact by working together** | Different government and non-government organisations working together to enable greening action to happen on a metropolitan scale and have collective impact.

Protecting and increasing urban greenery relies on not just a love for trees and greenspaces but also a clear strategy to improve legislation, policy and capacity-building. That is what this strategy does!

We thank our partners, government and non-government, for their contributions, energy and expertise in shaping this document. All sectors and public and private landowners across metropolitan Adelaide have an important role to play in greening our city. By joining forces through having shared priorities and delivering complementary activities, we will grow our tree canopy, cool our city and boost biodiversity.

INITIATIVE AIMS

The Urban Greening Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide will drive an ambitious and coordinated approach to the greening of our city. This strategy aims to bring together state agencies, metropolitan councils, non-government organisations, industry peak bodies, research institutions, Kurna representatives, community groups and the broader community to achieve a greener, more liveable city. Urban greening in Adelaide includes trees and other plants located on both public and private land.

This strategy sets a shared long-term vision: A resilient and liveable Adelaide for all, leafier, cooler and more biodiverse, and identifies practical actions to turn this vision into reality. It outlines:

- The extensive benefits of urban greening.
- The current landscape, including

the status of tree canopy, tree species diversity, remnant vegetation, permeability and community attitudes.

- Megatrends that are likely to impact urban greening into the future.
- Priority areas for action.
- The collaborative implementation approach.
- How success will be measured, at a regional level.
- What urban greening success could look like for metropolitan Adelaide by 2055.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

Many government and non-government stakeholders are already actively working to deliver a cooler, greener and more liveable Adelaide – though it's not without its challenges. The Urban Greening Strategy aims address challenges and opportunities practically by identifying priority areas for action that will better protect and enhance Adelaide's mature trees, greenspaces and urban biodiversity. The priority areas for action (outlined earlier) were drawn from extensive stakeholder consultation and community discussion.

This strategy establishes a consistent and shared monitoring approach across metropolitan Adelaide to increase efficiencies and provide optimal data for tracking progress towards its 30 percent urban tree canopy target.

Additionally, the strategy sets two performance investigation areas: reducing urban heat and improving plant species diversity. This strategy is supported by a series of background papers that provide a compelling evidence base for action.

COLLABORATION MAXIMISES IMPACT

All sectors, along with public and private landowners across metropolitan Adelaide, have an important role to play in greening our city. By joining forces through sharing priorities, knowledge and resources, collaborating and delivering complementary activities, we can achieve our goals. ■



WALLAN WALLAN REGIONAL PARK

A VISION FOR MELBOURNE'S
NORTH LEAPS CLOSER

WORDS VICTORIAN DEPT ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT
& CLIMATE ACTION AND MERRI CREEK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The feasibility study for Wallan Wallan Regional Park was recently prepared by Land Design Partnership and the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. The supporting background review was prepared by Ethos Urban. The biodiversity overview assessment was prepared by Nature Advisory. The regional park would be within Melbourne's Northern Growth Corridor (NGC), in 2018.

Continuing a long tradition of open-space planning, the Wallan Wallan Regional Park feasibility

study investigates the need for a regional park in Mitchell Shire, where population growth is the fastest in the state at 4.5 percent per annum. In 2020, the estimated resident population in Mitchell Shire was 47,837. This is expected to increase by a further 53,400 people by 2036.

Planned population growth across the townships of Wallan and Beveridge will significantly increase residential density. Wallan is a rapidly urbanising township, with population forecasts indicating a growth from 12,924 in 2019 to 43,712 in 2041, an increase of 238 percent. Beveridge is expected to grow



from 4,006 people in 2019 to 46,092 in 2041, an increase of 1050 percent.

The Shire has identified the establishment of a major park in Wallan and Beveridge as key to balancing urban development with open space, as well as protecting areas of environmental significance. (Mitchell Shire Council, 2013).

NORTHERN GROWTH CORRIDOR PLANS

Managing Melbourne's Growth (2012) recommends the retention of an interurban break between Beveridge and Wallan, to create



two distinct urban areas (Growth Areas Authority, 2012). This recommendation was reconfirmed when Wallan was included in the Urban Growth Boundary in 2011.

Planning for regional parks within urban growth corridors is based upon the standard of providing regional parks of at least 40 hectares of passive open space for every 150,000 people. Given new regional parks generally take a period of 10–15 years to establish, it is timely to commence an investigation into the feasibility of a park in Wallan.

Regional parks are large areas of open space characterised by having a natural or semi-natural condition within an urban setting, providing opportunities for members of local and Melbourne-wide communities to escape from the urban landscape and enjoy a sense of space and connection with nature. Regional parks are places where the Traditional Owners can connect with their heritage and continue cultural practices. Regional parks contribute to the health and wellbeing of their communities through the provision of recreation and social opportunities.

This report identifies the strategic and policy background into the investigation of the feasibility of a regional park in Wallan. It outlines the detailed physical, planning and recreation settings within the study area and their role in informing the feasibility of any proposed park and in determining any potential locations for a park boundary. Detail regarding an agreed park vision, park design, costs (land transfer, remediation, infrastructure), and a final park boundary will be determined via an appropriate consultative process.

The Cultural Heritage Sensitivity Overlay used to inform the potential park extent does not accurately represent the cultural values of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, and further investigation is required. The delivery of a detailed Cultural Values Study by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) will ensure significant Aboriginal cultural places and objects are identified and considered in further refinement of the park extent.

As Yasmin Kelsall, Environmental Planning Lead with Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC), explains, the area consists of “a group of volcanic cones rising from a grassy plain full of wetlands with Merri Creek running along one side. That combination of wetlands and volcanic cones (Green Hill, Spring Hill and Mt Fraser) is unique. These are some of the last wetlands of their kind in this part of Victoria, they once flourished across Melbourne, but most were extensively drained, so seeing the protection and revival of this grouping of wetlands via the new parkland would be very special.”

Habitat for threatened species such as the Growling Grass Frog, Latham’s Snipe and the Golden Sun Moth makes the area ecologically significant. Finding ways to protect these natural assets, Yasmin emphasises, is timely and very much needed.

Local campaigner Rob Eldridge has been advocating for the park’s establishment since 2010. Through his work with MCMC and the Wallan Environment Group, Rob has contributed to a vision that balances conservation, recreation and cultural heritage. “My role has been the passionate local advocate. But it’s one of those things where you never get to this point without literally hundreds of people in various roles supporting it,” Rob reflects.

“The vision has been refined over the years, as we have found out more about the environment, the previous wetlands and the significance of the area to the Traditional Owners. Wallan Wallan is the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung name for the area, which means circular place of water.”

Rob also highlights the park’s potential as a recreational resource for the rapidly growing communities around Wallan, where increasing urban density leaves children with fewer opportunities to connect with nature. Rob believes the park, which could include wild, protected wetlands as well as active recreation areas, could provide a spectrum of recreational opportunities for around 200,000 people, bringing both physical and mental health benefits.

MCMC has welcomed the release of the feasibility study, which marks a significant step towards formal planning. We hope to be actively involved in an advisory committee, alongside Wallan Environmental Group, to help shape the park’s boundaries and guide the planning process.

Bernadette Thomas, MCMC’s CEO, describes the park’s potential as “a pre-eminent parkland in Melbourne’s growing north, providing a host of nature-based recreation opportunities around biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage values. The new communities of the growth corridor deserve this, and we look forward to continuing to champion its development.”

MCMC’s next steps include advocating for the formalisation and implementation of the park’s plan. As Yasmin Kelsall notes: “A lot of the proposals that are in the feasibility study now need to be firmed up in a formal Wallan Wallan Regional Park plan. We believe it’s very important to have the park infrastructure in place as soon as possible, so that it’s very clear to developers and to anyone moving into these communities that the parks are there to be conserved and enjoyed.”

Rob Eldridge echoes this urgency: “You can’t retrofit a park of this size, so the feasibility report now needs to be used as part of the planning process. Public support, whether through letters to the editor, articles shared on social media or conversations with elected representatives and candidates, can help us keep the momentum going and secure that commitment.” ■



St Kilda has a history of sea baths and the master plan linked this past into the design of the pier. However, in 2012 to 2013 the southern extension of the breakwater compromised the pool design, so Parks Victoria and key stakeholders began thinking through options to achieve a similar visitor experience.

By 2016/17 the project architects and landscape architects came up with two design solutions which were released for community consultation. The result was overwhelming support for the option we see today.

Although not a sea pool, the terraced seating with expansive views to the city skyline (to the north), protected by the breakwater from the cool southerly breeze makes an ideal location to access the water and bask in the sun. A cantilevered accessible walkway over the breakwater ensures visitors can take in the views of the bay to the south.

While swimming is a very popular activity at St Kilda Pier, Parks Victoria encourages people to swim between the flags and within the no boating zone at nearby St Kilda Beach.

Working closely with the community and key stakeholders has been central to the project's success. For many years Parks Victoria has worked closely with EarthCare, City of Port Phillip and Phillip Island Nature Park in managing the Little Penguin colony on St Kilda Breakwater (accessed via the pier). Unfortunately there have been some incidents that put the health and wellbeing of the penguins at risk and part of the new pier design was to eliminate this risk.

In designing the new pier, a key consideration was finding a way to allow visitors to continue enjoying such proximity to the Little Penguins while prioritising their safety. The result is the new curved timber boardwalk and seating areas which have been created to separate penguins and people.

The new pier is accessed via public land managed by the City of Port Phillip. Parks Victoria continues to partner and work closely with council to ensure that the pier is seamlessly integrated into the foreshore. Similar engagement in planning and delivering the new Altona Pier and associated foreshore works was undertaken with the City of Hobsons Bay.

Some of the specific challenges in trying to integrate the pier with the foreshore included ensuring that the beach cleaning tractor continues to have access. Accountability for

NEW ST KILDA PIER

PARKS VICTORIA DELIVERS THE NEW ST KILDA PIER

WORDS KATHRYN DUFFY,
SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,
PARKS VICTORIA

The new state-of-the-art St Kilda Pier opened to visitors last December, providing an exciting destination for locals and visitors to Port Phillip Bay. Likened to similar destination piers across the world, the new St Kilda Pier provides sweeping terraces facilitating views to the city and Port Phillip Bay and access to the water. However, that is not all the pier offers.

Located on Bunurong Sea Country, the new pier is important to the local community and Victorian tourism and has proved incredibly popular over summer. It provides access to the yacht club marina, the Little Penguin colony, historic kiosk and ferry operations and is designed to meet the needs of the community today and for the next 50 years.

The pier also responds to the local environment and takes advantage of the existing and historical features that make St Kilda a popular place to visit throughout the year.

Parks Victoria, in its role as the port manager for the local ports of Port Phillip and Western Port (excluding the commercial port waters), oversees 41 piers and jetties, St Kilda Pier being one of them. Piers and jetties have a limited life in the harsh marine environment and at some stage they need to be replaced. This is true of St Kilda Pier which has been replaced numerous times since the first pier was built in 1853, and more recently in the 1970s-80s. Various engineering assessments determined that the pier was nearing the end of its design life and, despite strengthening works, would need to be replaced prior to becoming unsafe for visitors. Planning to replace the pier started as part of the St Kilda Harbour Master Plan 2007.

Following further detailed work, community and stakeholder engagement in 2016/17, and thanks to the \$53 million investment from the Victorian Government in the 2019-20 state budget, planning to build the new St Kilda Pier began.

The evolution of the design for St Kilda Pier from the initial ideas presented in the Master Plan to what has been constructed was challenging.

The Master Plan presented the concept of a sea pool integrated into the pier and a proposed wave screen.

extending the landscape design to the original pier footprint (back to Jacka Boulevard) and the reinstatement of Catani Gardens by removing part of Pier Road were also challenging.

For Parks Victoria to undertake these works approval was obtained from the Minister for Environment. These outcomes were achieved through working with council from the early master planning and concept design phases and into the construction project, with council represented in the project working groups.

As with all things in the coastal environment, changes to structures have the potential to impact on coastal processes. There has been a long-standing issue with natural erosion of the beach in front of the St Kilda Sea Baths. A rock groyne that helps hold sand on this beach needed to be modified to accommodate the new pier. Technical investigations were completed to understand the potential changes and impacts on the nearby beaches, which were deemed to be minor.

Parks Victoria worked on the project with a design team led by Jackson Clements Burrows



Architects, and a construction team led by Simpson Construction Company, and is thrilled to have delivered its largest single asset replacement project to date.


Early indications demonstrate St Kilda Pier provides diversity of recreational and commercial activities and contributes to the social, environmental and economic fabric of St Kilda, Melbourne and Victoria — as a local treasure and key tourism

destination. It surely has won fans over locally and globally. ■

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on this project visit the Parks Victoria web page @ parks.vic.gov.au/projects/melbourne-region/st-kilda-pier-redevelopment

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PARKS MANAGEMENT: WHAT'S CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

REFLECTIONS ON PARKS AND PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

WORDS TONY VARCOE, CONSERVE FOR LIFE

Since finishing up my recent government role in parks and protected area management, I've had the opportunity to think about what's changed (or not) in parks and protected area management over the decades since I started out in this career. In that process, I came up with an initial "top ten" observations (not necessarily in order of importance).

Parks and protected area management is an increasingly complex profession in which its goals are increasingly linked to sectors as diverse as NRM, health, education, infrastructure, planning and emergency management. It is both evolving as well as under significant resourcing pressure.

OBSERVATION 1

Parks and protected areas are still highly undervalued and under-recognised for the services and benefits they provide.

Despite excellent work undertaken over the last decade or more to better quantify the environmental, social and economic benefits of parks, protected and other green/blue spaces, both non-monetary and monetary benefits, this knowledge has still not yet translated into sustainable management and funding models that enable the majority of these places to effectively perform their role.

We now have much more advanced ecological models and tools, environmental economic accounting methods and ecosystem services frameworks, some excellent research data on the health and wellbeing benefits of parks including avoided health costs, many case studies on the cultural benefits of connection to Country and many landscape scale partnerships. It's also been rewarding to see at least the beginnings of fruitful cross sector engagement, particularly with the health and education sectors.

So why do parks and protected areas still struggle to be adequately recognised? Clearly there is more competition than ever for limited government, corporate and philanthropic sector resources and support. But we also hear loud voices convinced that parks and protected areas become "locked up" when created. My observation is that the hard-fought creation of parks and protected areas is still often taken for granted and their highly complex management requirements are still not well understood.

We clearly need to get better at translating our available knowledge into making strong business cases on benefits versus costs, as well as do much more to educate and involve

the broader community (including our young people and families) both about the direct relevance of parks and nature conservation to their own wellbeing and the excellent return on investment in creating and actively managing these special places.

OBSERVATION 2

The risks and impacts of climate change on parks and protected areas have rapidly moved from the research agenda to an urgent real-time reality.

When I started out in my career, climate change risk was considered an emerging threat with uncertain consequences for our future generations. In the blink of an eye, we are now needing to both plan for and respond to a wide range of current and future climate change driven events. For parks and protected areas and other green/blue spaces, this includes not only significant ecological impacts but wide-ranging impacts on cultural, visitor experience, safety and other values.






Right now, we are being expected to face up to the most challenging of scientific and moral questions: With our partial (but increasing) knowledge of the risks to environmental, social and economic values, how and what do we prioritise to determine which ecological, cultural and visitor

ACTIVITY PLAYGROUNDS



NATIVE



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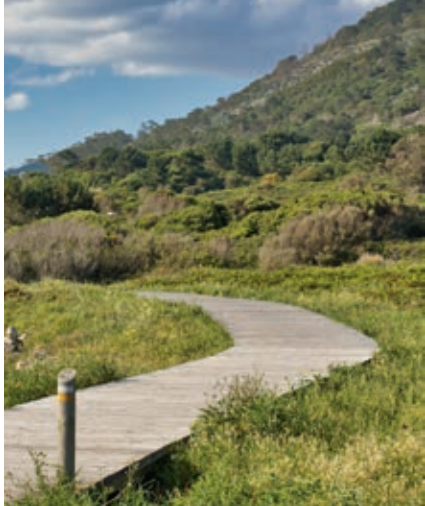


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experience values and assets we must keep and which we are prepared to modify or give up?

While many experts and place managers are thinking about these issues and implementing approaches, such as the Resist-Accept-Direct (RAD) – Climate Change (US National Park Service), the broader community is struggling to understand why and how these decisions are being made. Therefore, not only will researchers, park managers and decision makers need to invest in ongoing risk assessments and climate-proof recovery programs, investment will also be needed in education and involving the community about such challenges and uncertainties.

OBSERVATION 3

The transition to Traditional Owner recognition, involvement and authority has changed how we approach park management, but it has not been linear and is ever evolving and diverse.

My own reflection is that the changes involving First Nations that have occurred over the past few decades, and are continuing to evolve, are the most consequential of all for parks and protected area management.

We have seen significant and hard-fought changes to the legal and planning frameworks that acknowledge and involve First Nations peoples but, beyond those, perhaps the biggest changes relate to the big picture: the transformation in the way that parks and protected areas (and broader landscapes) are being recognised and valued.

While Traditional Owners have been practicing a “biocultural landscape” approach to land and sea management for generations, many park and protected area managers are now recognising the fundamental interdependency (not separation) between healthy nature and people’s cultural, physical, emotional, spiritual and economic wellbeing. The Healthy Parks Healthy People movement,

originated by Parks Victoria, now adopted by many countries, borrowed from these biocultural stewardship principles. Based on shared knowledge, this approach to management is now being played out through park management plans, Country plans, joint management plans, on-ground partnerships and governance arrangements.

One of the biggest lessons over the past few decades is that successful models are not based on a cookie cutter approach and there is great value in recognising and celebrating alternative models.

While there have been many excellent examples of success, the journey of acknowledgement, recognition, decision authority and shared knowledge may be frustratingly slow for some and confusing or challenging for sections of the broader community. We clearly have more work to do to successfully explain, educate and involve park users and the broader community in how these changes will benefit the natural cultural, social and other values of parks (and Australian society more broadly).

OBSERVATION 4

The most effective park and protected area managers have moved on from a passive preservation mindset (ie. that nature can look after itself) to becoming more active stewards that include knowledge-based adaptive management models.

With the diversity, scale and intensity of threats to conservation (and other) values, many park and protected areas managers have recognised that passive “leave nature to do its own thing” management approaches are unlikely to be effective in meeting our conservation goals, and that more interventionist and adaptive approaches are now required.

Significant resourcing constraints aside, these require explicit goals and targets, thorough risk assessment, cross-discipline partnerships, robust monitoring and evaluation systems, bravery to experiment and the ability to communicate the why and how in relevant language to policy makers and the community. They also need organisational commitment to stay the course, as results don’t happen quickly.

Whether in threatened species management, ecosystem recovery, protection of cultural values or nature-based health interventions, active stewardship does not come cheap.

While there is still much room to improve (especially in turning available data into knowledge), effective park managers now have a wide range of well researched tools available that they did not have before to both prioritise their efforts and implement on-ground strategies. Additionally, effective park managers have developed great networks of cross-sector and cross-disciplinary partners and allies to be involved in and advocate for action.

OBSERVATION 5

The evidence to inform policy, strategy and management has become more sophisticated, but it’s only part of the game.

Linked to the above observation, and similar to the broader NRM sector, park and protected area management has become much more sophisticated through evolved tools such as Conservation Action Planning, remote sensing advances, decision support tools, cross sector knowledge and research partnerships and citizen science tools. In the past it was primarily the domain of the physical and biological scientists to inform management strategy, it’s now clear that the social scientists can play just as an important role by explaining human behaviours that can increase the likelihood of success.

Over the years, total knowledge, including traditional knowledge, has become a more important tool to developing effective policy, strategy and management practice. This is improving, but it’s still a work in progress. With some notable exceptions, more work is needed in applying available data and knowledge (eg. “state of” assessments, monitoring programs, traditional knowledge) to inform and adapt management practice.

In the past we assumed that the science would direct decision making. We now understand that decision makers are strongly influenced by personal experiences not just their head. The story is as important as the data. We now understand that the most effective park and protected area managers (partnering with their allies) are able to create a convincing narrative about why and how management actions are required and can clearly explain the benefits to the different beneficiaries. I would like to say that much progress has been made in this area, but if current resourcing levels are an indicator of government and corporate understanding of the

urgency of what needs to be done in conservation and parks management, there is much more work to be done.

OBSERVATION 6

Parks and protected areas have become a jigsaw piece within a broader landscape/seascape.

An effectively managed comprehensive and representative parks and protected area system remains the backbone of our conservation efforts, but they can't do everything. Three decades ago, the parks and reserves estate were delivered primarily via government managed parks and reserves, but this has dramatically changed. We have seen the rapid evolution of alternative models to conserve and manage landscapes through Private Protected Areas and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA's), which has resulted in more than 90M hectares protected compared to 65M hectares of government managed places (latest data 2022). We have also seen the increasing role that other green/blue spaces, from urban parks to state forests to other private land conservation, can play. The result is that we now have a much more complex interaction of government, IPA and private protected areas across landscapes that interact with each other.

Noting these changes and recognising that the scale and intensity of threats doesn't respect administrative boundaries. Achieving conservation and land/sea management goals has become an increasingly complex partnership model. We are also seeing the evolution of landscape scale approaches through Country plans developed by First Nations. These are all positive forces that encourage common approaches, sharing of knowledge and whole of landscape planning and prioritisation of effort.

OBSERVATION 7

The expectations dilemma: Can each park or protected area be everything for everyone?

Three decades on from when I started my park management journey, some of the fundamental questions around what and who parks and protected areas are for are still being played out. Community expectations have become more diverse and contested, technology that enables access to parks has dramatically changed, and acknowledgement and recognition of First Nations has placed parks in a bigger context. We have ten million more people living in Australia with their associated demand for exploring and experiencing parks and nature.

The parks and protected areas estate has grown significantly over that time, and both government and non-government organisations recognise that these places need to be managed for multiple goals; primarily conservation and restoration of natural and cultural heritage and nature-based visitor experiences. However, what does this mean in practice in the context of our current environmental and social changes?

Increasingly, planning and decision making for access, permitted uses and economic development of parks is now being made within the context of broader landscapes and tenures. Yet many stakeholders still perceive that if their local or favourite park has any restrictions on uses or is not prioritised for new facilities, then that park is being unnecessarily locked up. Each park and protected area are, in many ways, expected to provide everything for everyone. This is neither logical nor sustainable.

Today, the opportunity exists to raise community awareness of parks and protected areas in a broader landscape context, so that they

complement rather than are expected to compete with other tenures (eg. state forest, other public land, local government managed areas, private land) in their purpose and focus. This means that some recreational or commercial uses may be better suited to tenures other than protected areas.

OBSERVATION 8

Parks and nature need a bigger pool of informed active people that see these places as contemporary and relevant.

Only a few decades ago, our evidence told us that people were far more likely to be a park visitor if they had higher income, higher education, spoke English at home, didn't have a disability or were from a generally more advantaged background. While there is still room to improve here, we are finally making in-roads into enabling parks and protected areas to be more inclusive, deliberately increasing engagement and participation beyond the "easiest to reach" groups.

This not only improves fundamental equity of access to nature experiences it also has wider and more significant economic and social benefits that broaden community support for parks. The most effective park and protected area managers are now actively reaching out to other sectors (eg. health, education, local government, multicultural organisations) to create partnerships and programs that reduce physical and social barriers to participation and make these special places relevant to a broader cross section of our community.

We have known for many years that key pillars to meeting conservation goals are to increase the community's environmental literacy through education and support active community participation that promotes stewardship. However, something that has not changed is that these types of programs have continued to struggle



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to gain agency support and resources because, in part, they often have a longer-term investment timeframe for outcomes and they are often perceived as less operationally relevant (“nice to do”) when compared to other park management activities.

Additionally, while volunteers have been the backbone of community support for decades, the volunteering sector has been going through a period of significant transition due to changing demographics, motivations and expectations and competition for how people spend their time. This combined with changes in legal and risk obligations, mean that the parks and protected areas sector needs to explore new ways to enable and encourage more community involvement.

Noting the substantial economic benefits created by nature-based tourism, the social benefits of nature participation are many (eg. building social connection, increasing resilience and mental health, gaining new skills and knowledge, connection to place, meaning and life purpose), yet their quantified benefits are still under-recognised by policy and decision makers. Partnering with the private sector, such as outdoor education

providers, and other sectors, including education and health, will be an increasingly important conservation and social investment.

OBSERVATION 9

Addressing risk versus enabling reward: Where's the right balance?

Just like other managers of public venues, the risk environment, including statutory and governance obligations, of park and protected area managers has changed dramatically, with risk management now one of the primary drivers of management decisions.

Recognising the need for a high standard of governance, and that many risks are very real with significant consequences, some risk management responses need to be non-negotiable. For example, employee or volunteer safety. However, the question remains what level of other risks are tolerable in order to gain significant rewards, enable innovation and increase social licence?

Today, the most effective park and protected area managers have clear risk management frameworks to calculate risks and consequences. They also have a culture that understands the real trade-offs between the “just say no” response

and managing other risks (eg. loss of reputation and support) to enable, not constrain, environmental, cultural, economic and community benefits.

OBSERVATION 10

Partnerships aren't for free.

Effective park and protected area managers have evolved from a “do it yourself” mindset to realising that investment into partnerships can leverage and multiply knowledge, resources and goodwill, leading to improved conservation outcomes.

Successful partnerships rely on a two-way relationship based on the gaining of mutual outcomes and benefits. To achieve these partnerships across boundaries, sectors and disciplines requires investment of time and a willingness to negotiate including minimising approval hurdles.

Community support, including volunteering, is not “free labour”, it requires a culture of planned, prioritised and cooperative work. This doesn't imply that park managers should not be clear about their organisational priorities. But it does require mature relationship management of listening, knowledge sharing, involvement and agreed action. ■



CREATING ACCESSIBLE OUTDOOR SPACES FOR EVERYONE

RECREATION AOTEAROA LAUNCHES THE OUTDOORS ACCESSIBILITY DESIGN GUIDELINES

WORDS RECREATION AOTEAROA

This year, with support from Sport New Zealand, Recreation Aotearoa launched the *Outdoors Accessibility Design Guidelines*.

The first guidelines of their kind in Aotearoa (New Zealand), this resource provides practical, detailed guidance to support accessibility in outdoor settings.

A NEED FOR CHANGE

In Aotearoa, we are lucky to have stunning beaches, bush, mountains and open green spaces on our doorstep. Everyone deserves to access and enjoy these taonga (treasures), no matter

their ability. But we know that not everyone can.

The Outdoor Accessibility Design Guidelines were created in response to a need identified by Recreation Aotearoa members and the disabled community.

Active NZ data shows that disabled people are less likely to be active outdoors. Not only are disabled people less likely to be active outdoors, the latest Household Disability Survey¹ highlights that people with impairments are also less likely to have visited an outdoor area

(beach, park, reserve) in the last four weeks compared to non-disabled people (67% compared with 84%).

The Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Survey, run by Recreation Aotearoa and the Department of Conservation in 2024, asked people with lived experience of disability to share their experiences of outdoor recreation in New Zealand. A total of 72 percent of respondents agreed “a lot” or “totally” that they would like to take part in outdoor recreation more often².

However, many outdoor spaces across Aotearoa are not accessible. Poor design, difficult terrain, lack of information, or missing facilities often create barriers that prevent disabled people from participating in outdoor recreation.

A COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE

Recreation Aotearoa developed the guidelines in collaboration with an Outdoors Accessibility Working Group. The working group included experts from the recreation industry, including

people with lived experience of disability. Industry leaders and accessibility experts also contributed. Insights gained from the Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Survey helped shape the guidelines.

The guidelines are designed to be a resource to support more inclusive and accessible outdoor spaces for everyone. However, insights and information within the guidelines could be helpful for improving accessibility in other recreation environments. We encourage everyone who works in the recreation industry to check them out.

WHAT'S THE GUIDELINES OFFER

The guidelines are designed for people planning, designing, developing, managing or maintaining outdoor recreation spaces. This includes people and groups advocating for accessible recreation.

WHAT'S COVERED

The guidelines offer detailed, practical advice for improving accessibility in recreation spaces and cover a range of outdoor environments such as:

- Trails and pathways
- Beaches and lakes
- Open greenspaces
- Picnic and gathering areas

Topics include:

- **Processes & planning** | Embedding accessibility and inclusion in policies and projects.
- **Community engagement** | Consultation, co-design and collaboration with the disability community.
- **Outdoor features** | Signage, parking, toilets, picnic areas, drinking fountains, rubbish bins, jetties, fishing pontoons and duck shooting huts (maimais).
- **Trail specifications** | Inclusive design guidelines for mountain biking and walking trails.

The guidelines can be used for planning a new trail or considering accessibility needs for a specific small project such as rebuilding a boardwalk, replacing a toilet or replacing a bridge and ensuring accessibility is done as well as possible.

An example of a challenge for some adaptive riders is squeeze bar barriers, where the trail might be otherwise perfect for them to ride but these are the only barrier to access. There is guidance about what can be added alongside to aid accessibility, allowing people with disabilities to experience more of the outdoors.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The wellbeing benefits of recreation is widely known. To ensure we create spaces that all New Zealanders can access, accessibility should be considered from the outset of all projects.

While not all outdoor recreation spaces can be fully accessible, these guidelines support both small upgrades and large-scale planning to enhance accessibility within environmental constraints.

"As a person with disability from motor neurone disease, riding New Zealand's scenic trails with friends and family is important to my wellbeing. I ride my three-wheeler for fun, friendship, seeing new places and immersing myself in nature. I love looking at the photos and videos of the great trails we've done later to relive the feeling of the ride," explains Natalie Gauld — who has ridden either part of or all of New Zealand's Great Rides trail.

"Doing a trail provides a reason to go somewhere different and enjoy the journey on the way. At the end of a ride, I have a feeling of control and accomplishment. My riding has benefited others too. I'm always inviting friends and family to join me on trails, so they also get to enjoy New Zealand's Great Rides."

Furthermore, making a trail accessible can make it more enjoyable for others. For example, riders with little experience and riders with a child in a buggy behind the bike.

Over time, the inclusive trail guidance will support trail users in making informed decisions about which trails to access. Trails that are graded, developed and maintained using these guidelines will provide more consistent information and improved experiences for all trail users.

A great example of this approach is the Adaptive Riding Trails page on the New Zealand Cycle Trail website. It highlights sections of trail across the motu (country) that are better suited for adaptive riders and provides practical information to support accessible trail use. Resources like this help open the outdoors to more people, making recreation fairer, safer and more inclusive.

A TOOL FOR ONGOING COLLABORATION

It's important to note that the guidelines are not intended as a replacement for meaningful collaboration with the disability community. Instead, they are

a starting point to identify and enhance outdoor accessibility opportunities together with local communities.

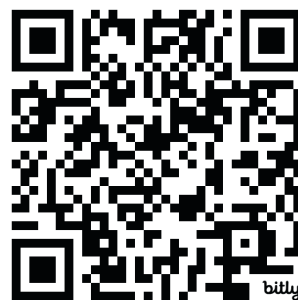
LOOKING AHEAD

We hope that the guidelines support and inspire future mahi (work) in the recreation industry to enhance accessibility to public outdoor spaces

As new places are designed and existing ones upgraded, these guidelines will help create consistent and inclusive experiences for all.

SEE THE GUIDELINES

The Outdoors Accessibility Design Guidelines and supporting resources are available on the Recreation Aotearoa website. You can view the guidelines by scanning the QR code below or visit nzrecreation.org.nz/outdoors-accessibility-design-guidelines



Full versions of the guidelines are available in PDF and Word formats. Summaries are available in Easy Read, Large Print, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and audio formats. As alternate formats become available, they will be added to the website. ■

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1. Stats NZ: The Household Disability Survey 2023
2. The Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Survey was run in partnership with the Department of Conservation from 11 March to 12 April 2024. It sought feedback on outdoors experiences from New Zealanders with lived experience of disability. 702 people participated in the survey.

THE CHANGING FACE OF AOTEAROA

WORDS RECREATION AOTEAROA, INSIGHTS 46



A group of older Pacific women. *Image Te Ara*

Our communities are increasingly diverse. Increasingly aging, NEW Zealanders and those experiencing financial hardship all have unique needs and require different planning and provision. But how are we changing? And what is the impact on recreation and sport?

AGING POPULATION

Our aging population has a growing proportion of people aged over 65, with a current number of 25 percent, growing to more than 33 percent by 2040 (Stats NZ population projections 2023).

Many people aged 65 years and older:

- Are in paid work (33%)
- Live in one-person households (25%)
- Have Government Superannuation as their sole source of income (40% have no other income besides NZ Super)
- Increasing numbers of others raising grandchildren (for example)
- One in six of all New Zealanders live with disability. Of those aged 65 and over, 35 percent are living with disability, visible or not (Household Disability Survey 2023).

Recreation providers must avoid grouping older adults as homogenous. Consider the key barriers and enablers to participation according to needs and preferences.

Preferences for activity will vary according to age, interests, ability and affordability. Some will be active and in good health, others may have compounding health issues that impact on participation.

For More Information

- Insights #27: Over 65 Not Out!
- Sport NZ: Inclusivity Hub
- Insights #37: Principles of Inclusion
- Insights #39: Water Safety (impact of culture on water experiences)

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Economic factors influence participation in recreation and sport. Increasing income and wealth disparity significantly influences participation. New Zealand data tells us that:

- One in every eight children live in households with less than half the median disposable income.
- Many adults and families are struggling to meet basic needs due to rising housing costs and other living expenses.
- Lack of money is a key barrier to participation beyond the 'actual cost' of a programme or event.

Financial hardship influences:

- Actual and perceived free time, constraints on parental time
- Economic stress, which can limit recreation resources.
- Limited access to opportunities.
- Health and wellbeing considerations directly resulting from hardship.

For More Information

- Insights #12: Equity and Leisure Explores the Impact of Poverty on Participation.

DIVERSITY

New Zealand's population is diverse, with increasing numbers of different ethnic backgrounds.

New Zealand has seen an increased proportion of Asian, Pasifika and MELAA citizens. For example, the most recent Census data shows a 47 percent increase in Filipino immigrants in the preceding five years. Considerations for relevant recreation opportunities:

- A lack of fundamental principles regarding physical activity can impact participation.
- Cultural and social mores may have a positive or negative impact on participation.

- Offer programmes that cater for specific needs and preferences, involving people in the co-design of programmes.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

There is a growing recognition of the role that physical activity plays in improving mental health and reducing stress.

- About one in three adults (34.8%) report experiencing anxiety or depression with a large increase in young people having these experiences.
- A large body of research tells us that being outdoors, either actively or in reflective mode, is beneficial in myriad ways for physical and mental wellbeing.
- Opportunities for play and connection to culture (in particular, for Māori) are also paramount for mental wellbeing.

For More Information

- Insights #24: Well Minds
- Insights #32: Mental Wellbeing Mindsets

New Zealand is increasingly an urbanised population, with more people living in cities than previously.

- Around 87 percent of all New Zealanders live in urban areas (ie. 1,000+ inhabitants).
- Kiwis are shifting from cities to the regions, a trend driven by factors such as affordability, lifestyle preferences, and the ability to work remotely.
- People make connections through recreation. Opportunities vary according to the physical environment, local resources, transport, and affordability.
- Urbanisation has led to a rise in activities like parkour, 3x3 basketball, and scootering. Good urban design creates flexible spaces able to be used in myriad ways.

- Greenspace is under threat, but the importance of green and blue spaces is paramount.

For More Information

- Insights #28: Refuge, Restoration and Renewal in Urban Aotearoa

INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

Acknowledge similarities and differences

- Identify specific needs across a diverse range of groups.
- Tailor offerings to the specific needs of groups.
- Recognise common motivations across different groups – such as wellbeing, social engagement and learning.

Intersectionality

- Identify the multiple factors that contribute to participation barriers – social, geographical, physical, cultural, economic.
- Design offerings that meet a range of needs and barriers.

Accessibility

Consider all the possible dimensions of accessibility, including:

- Affordability
- Time
- Health
- Proximity
- Access

Recognise that fundamental movement skills are an essential precondition of participation.

Wellbeing

- Promote recreation and its contribution to wellbeing: personal, family, community and societal.

- Celebrate the cultural value of active recreation.

Design of spaces and places

- Consider safety, gathering spaces, accessibility, toilets, shade in spatial design.
- Bring spaces and places alive through activations.

FURTHER READING

- Sport NZ Futures on Demographic change
- Sport NZ Asian Participation



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ENABLING BENEFIT FOR ALL

DEMOCRATISING ACCESS TO AND PROMOTING INCLUSION IN NATURE-BASED RECREATION FOR THE DISABLED COMMUNITY

WORDS CRYSTAL BRINDLE, MASTERS STUDENT IN PARKS MANAGEMENT, LINCOLN UNIVERSITY (NZ) & SENIOR RANGER IN FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK, DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION (NZ)

As a result of myriad barriers across society, fewer disabled New Zealanders take part in recreation, generally, than non-disabled (Whaikaha, 2023), and many never get to experience conservation lands that are protected for all. This is cause for concern as research has shown that the benefits from nature and recreation are of greater consequence for disabled people. Park managers and those working in the sector have a role to play in reducing these barriers.

This article addresses the issue of equitable access and inclusion in nature-based recreation for the disabled community and the role of public land managers. The lens adopted is on public lands and waters based on the rationale that such places are held for all people and provide ample opportunity for attaining the benefits that nature-based recreation provides. While written with the New Zealand context in mind, the discussion has broad application and draws from international literature.

There are widely acknowledged benefits linked to engagement in nature-based recreation of both psychological and physiological quality (Gladwell et al, 2013). Nature-based recreation provides health benefits that are of particular importance to those living with disability. A strong argument for the outsized importance of recreation for disabled people is made in many quarters, with a large body of research demonstrating heightened benefits of physical activity and nature contact for people with physical, sensory or cognitive impairment (Bell,

2019; Hennig et al, 2015; Martin, 2013). Research has found a transference effect of nature-based activity on the day-to-day lives of disabled people increasing the likelihood of pursuing new challenges, undertaking self-directed actions and an elevated awareness of one's capabilities (Chikuta et al, 2019).

DISABILITY IN NATURE-BASED RECREATION

Disability does not preclude a desire to immerse oneself in nature, experience adventure nor seek challenge, but there are differences and unique challenges that contribute to underrepresentation in nature-based recreation.

The social model of disability (Thomas, 2007) enables an understanding of disability as the result of disabling environments and attitudes in society, rather than the identity of the individual. Viewed this way, a person's experience of their impairment and the barriers they face combine to create something disabling and the focus is widened to include the barrier and what can be done to remove it.

Acknowledging the breadth of experience and preference in the heterogeneous disabled community, it is useful to note that disabled participation in nature-based activities does not look only one way. Disabled people camp, hunt, ski, watch wildlife, ride bikes and partake in almost any conceivable recreation activity, with some research even showing greater participation rates, when given the opportunity, than non-disabled recreationists.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS: PHYSICAL, INFORMATIONAL & ATTITUDINALE

In the context of disability, accessibility refers to the design and implementation of products, services and environments in such a way as to ensure equal access to their functionality and potential benefits. A barrier is anything that gets in the way of this.

People with impaired physical, sensory or cognitive ability are more likely to encounter barriers to recreation than non-disabled people.

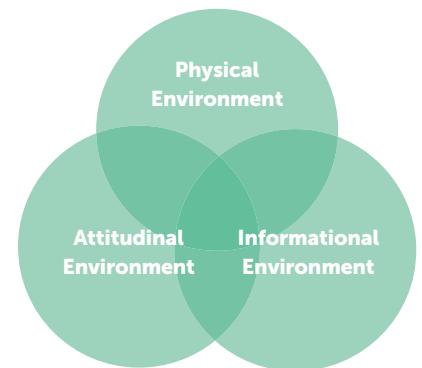
A review of international literature reveals barriers that can be grouped into themes of physical, informational and attitudinal.

Physical barriers are often most readily identified and include a lack of facilities required for disability access such as toilets and changing areas, wide-enough trails, accessible gates, carparks, and auditory or tactile guidance features.

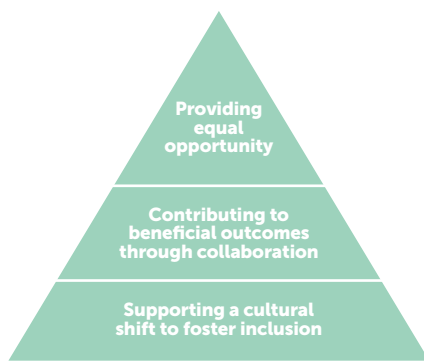
Informational barriers are regularly overlooked but stand out as the initial item of importance determining whether a person considers visiting a recreation setting in the first place. Research confirms that information is key so that people can make informed decisions and undertake challenge by choice and that the lack of such information is a sizeable barrier.

Studies have revealed that attitudinal barriers can be the most important, and perhaps the most difficult to overcome (Chikuta et al, 2019). Fear of social judgement or ostracisation can prevent disabled people from trying a recreation activity and lack of social support for healthy risk seeking is a barrier to participation.

These themes are further understood when considered as overlapping barrier environments in the context of parks and protected areas — as shown in Figure 1. This visual representation helps demonstrate where a person may encounter a particular type of barrier.



Overlapping barrier environments in the context of parks and protected areas (adapted from Groulx et al. 2021)



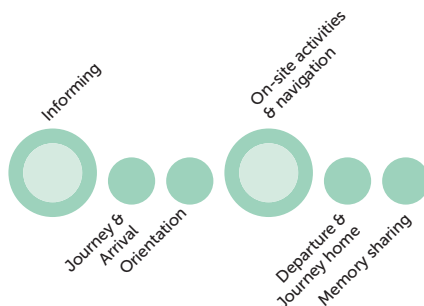
Representing the three-part role of public lands management as tiers of foundational importance

SUPPORTING A CULTURE SHIFT TO FOSTER INCLUSION

Research has found that the human factor or “software” of an experience can be of greater importance to a disabled person than the “hardware” of facilities (Chikuta et al, 2019). Therefore, park managers should take steps to be at the forefront of facilitating an organisational structure that develops inclusive parks through staff training and actively recruiting people with disabilities to be part of their teams.

CONTRIBUTING TO BENEFICIAL OUTCOMES THROUGH COLLABORATION

Collaboration and coordination across the nature-based recreation system can help inform meaningful and beneficial outcomes for disabled people across overlapping environments (Wall-Reinius et al, 2023; Groulx et al, 2021). A chain of recreation experience, as represented in Figure 3, shows the holistic journey of a disabled person taking part in nature-based recreation and can assist managers in identifying where their actions can make the most difference and where collaboration is needed.



Chain of recreation experience (adapted from Hennig et al, 2015 tourism service chain)

PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Research and the voices of disability advocacy groups send a clear message that disabled people have a realistic

expectation of what parks can provide and do not wish for every barrier to be removed (Carruthers Den Hoed, 2008). Rather, there is an earnest desire to experience a wide range of activities in diverse ways.

To seek equal opportunity rather than equal results highlights freedom as a common underlying value of outdoor recreation participation. Parks and recreation managers play an important role in enabling informed and free decision making across a range of activities and settings.

CONCLUSION

Within the delicate balance that is park management, moving beyond misconceptions of disabled nature-based recreation can help managers address the inherent complexities of equitable benefit distribution. Managers should make room for a range of experiences that moves beyond ableist perspectives, and in doing so may find that accessibility looks different from what they expected.

This article has been centred around the two-part goal of democratising access to and fostering inclusion in nature-based recreation for disabled people, because issues of equity lie at the heart of the public lands concept.

Enabling more participation by embracing a wider cohort of recreationists broadens the nature stewardship community through the value attachment that comes from personal experience in nature.

It is clear that equitable access is indeed significant as more inclusive parks and recreation spaces distribute the recognised benefits more widely, grow the nature stewardship community, and help ensure the broadest possible constituency of support for the protected area concept. ■

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

I will use ‘disabled person’ or ‘disabled people’ in this paper to follow the convention used by Whaikaha, the Ministry of Disabled People, which acknowledges the social model of disability. I will also use ‘non-disabled’ over ‘able-bodied’ as the latter implies mana or status to not having a disability (Whaikaha, 2023).

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EMPOWERING CHILDREN THROUGH **CO-DESIGN**

THE VALUE OF CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING

WORDS DR WENDY HODDINOTT, HERITAGE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, GATHER LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of children's perspectives in shaping their environments, particularly in the design of public spaces and community areas. By involving children in the design and planning process, we not only create spaces that better meet children's needs we also empower them to become active contributors to the places where they live.

This article highlights the value of children's involvement in landscape architecture and open space planning, drawing on a recent collaborative design project in Aotearoa New Zealand that demonstrates the transformative impact of child-centred co-design.

THE PROCESS OF CO-DESIGN: ENGAGING CHILDREN AS DESIGNERS

Co-design is a collaborative approach that values the input of all stakeholders, including children, in the design process. In one of Gather Landscape Architecture's recent projects, children designed an outdoor playspace at Te Kōmanawa Rowley School in Ōtautahi Christchurch, situated on land that just a few hundred years ago was part of Te Kuru wetland. The goal was to create a space that met the children's educational and recreational needs while reflecting the cultural and ecological significance of the area.

From the outset, children were encouraged to explore their ideas through sketches and cardboard models. These early activities allowed them to express their "top-of-mind" ideas, such as flying foxes, swings and slides, while at the same time encouraging them to delve deeper into the possibilities of what could be achieved within the project's constraints. For example, one group's initial idea for a treehouse evolved into a more achievable platform structure that retained the original essence of their vision.



The iterative process inspired creative experimentation and fostered the children's problem-solving skills.

DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

An essential part of the project was grounding the design process in the cultural and ecological context of the school. Te Kōmanawa (The Springs) reflects the site's location within Te Kuru, a wetland swamp that once drained into the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River. The area shares the same soil type as Pūtarikamotu Riccarton Bush, which, as the only original kahikatea forest remaining in Christchurch, lies just six kilometres from the school.

The Gather design team used this example to introduce some of the less tangible natural and cultural elements to the children as part of the design process, helping them to appreciate the significance of the place and how it could influence their design ideas.

One of the key inspirations drawn from this environment was

the kahikatea tree, with its familiar buttress-like trunks, which became a central motif for the play structures. The children were encouraged to explore their cultural and natural narratives through various activities, such as observing the local flora and fauna. This not only enhanced their understanding of the place, but also deepened their connection to it. By relating these environmental features to a small native forest in their school and their own ideas for the playspace, the children began to see how their design choices could reflect the identity and values of their school and community.

FOSTERING A SENSE OF IDENTITY AND CONNECTION

The children's involvement in the design process also served to strengthen their own sense of identity and belonging. The project was not just about creating a physical space but about creating a place where the children could connect with each other, with nature and with their cultural heritage. The school is located within a Māori and Pasifika



community. The Samoan concept of Tauhi Vā, one of the school's core values, means to nurture and care for the relationships between people and things. This concept was introduced to the children as a guiding principle in their design work.

Tauhi Vā was evident in the children's thoughtful discussions about spaces for quiet play, group gatherings and interactions with the environment. For example, one group proposed a "hiding place" surrounded by native plants, reflecting their desire for spaces that supported both solitary and social play.

The children's designs also considered relationships with younger tamariki (children) at the neighbouring Kōhanga Reo (Māori language preschool), integrating features that encouraged their shared use.

FROM MODELS TO PROTOTYPES: TESTING AND REFINING IDEAS

Once the children had refined their ideas through sketches and cardboard models, they progressed to more advanced scale models using plywood. The children worked in groups, testing and refining their ideas through multiple iterations of their models. This process of prototyping allowed the children to apply their learning and see their ideas come to life in a physical form.

The children were encouraged to think critically about their designs, by measuring and discussing the scale, form and function of each element. As they tested their prototypes, they made adjustments, considered safety standards and reflected on how their designs would function in the real world. One group, after encountering a design challenge, turned their model upside down to look at the problem from a new perspective, creating excitement about their growing problem-solving skills and creative approach to design.

After confirming the final design of three small plywood scale models, the

children constructed and tested the models at full size, taping together large cardboard pieces. The children moved their life-size prototypes around the school to test them in different locations before settling on their final position.

THE BUILD: BRINGING THE DESIGN TO LIFE

It was during the construction phase that the children's designs came to life. Modules for the play structures were built offsite in a local joinery workshop, allowing for testing before assembly. The children then painted and assembled the pieces onsite with their whānau (family) and adult helpers, gaining hands-on experience with tools, teamwork and problem-solving.

As construction progressed, the children's engagement deepened. They became confident in their abilities, took pride in their contribution and saw the tangible impact of their efforts. For example, a student who initially hesitated to model their ideas in cardboard at the beginning of the project, grew more confident through the process and eventually led their group in painting and assembling several key structural elements.

The project's hands-on approach reinforced the children's sense of ownership and the knowledge that they had played a central role in creating something meaningful for their school community.

THE IMPACT: EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND GIVING STRENGTH TO COMMUNITIES

The finished playspace has had a profound impact on the school community. The Rowley School principal noted that the structures have become highly popular, with children using the space more frequently and with greater purpose. One child, previously struggling with emotional regulation, finds the tower structure to be a "safe place" during moments of distress. This highlights the importance of creating spaces that foster ownership and belonging.

The project has also strengthened the school community. The play structures have become a catalyst for connection, linking different parts of the school such as the native forest and orchard, providing spaces for students, teachers and whānau (family) to come together.

The children's involvement in the design process has helped them to develop a deeper connection to the

space and a greater sense of agency in shaping their environment.

Educationally, the project has integrated curriculum elements such as maths, science and the arts, aligning closely with the New Zealand technology curriculum. For example, children calculated dimensions for their models and explored maths concepts such as scale and the relationship between their models and final life size forms to ensure the structures related to their own height and space requirements.

The co-design process provided a real-world creative learning experience, further enriching their education.



CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF CO-DESIGN IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING

The Rowley School project illustrates the transformative power of involving children in designing their outdoor spaces. By empowering children to participate in the design process, we not only create environments that serve children's needs but also foster a sense of ownership, connection and responsibility. Co-design equips children with skills and confidence to be active community participants, and deepens their understanding of their relationship with their environment.

As we look to the future of landscape architecture and open space planning, it is clear that involving children in the design process is not just a valuable community engagement exercise, it is an essential step towards creating spaces that reflect the needs, values and aspirations of the people who use them. By continuing to prioritise children's involvement, we can ensure that our public spaces are truly inclusive, empowering and responsive to the needs of future generations. ■

Figure 3 Desintation Kāwaroa.
Image Taranaki Foundation



THE SQUEEZE ON RECREATION FUNDING

THE SQUEEZE ON COMMUNITY RECREATION, SPORT AND PLAY FUNDING IS CREATING ALTERNATIVE FUNDING STREAMS

WORDS BRYCE POMFRETT, SENIOR CONSULTANT, RSL

Support and recreation make a significant contribution to the sense of belonging for many New Zealand communities. Sport New Zealand has assessed that for every \$1 invested in recreational physical activity, a social return of \$2.12 is generated. Unfortunately, that first \$1 is getting harder to find.

Since 2018, the play, active recreation and sport sector has become more reliant on central and local government funding and Class 4 gaming grants. This is driven by an overall 14 percent drop in sector funding between 2018 and 2022¹. The bad news? This diminishing trend is set to continue.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING IS UNDER PRESSURE

Local councils have often footed the bill to build and maintain the spaces where we walk, cycle, score goals or shoot hoops. But council funding is stretched. Elected members now need to prioritise basics like water and transport.

Many local government play, sport and active recreation assets are tired, unsuitable and vulnerable to extreme weather events. Auckland Council, for example, identified a \$1.8 billion funding gap for parks and community spaces through its last 10-year plan process. Much of this shortfall is needed to renew existing assets or catch up after years of underinvestment in parks, sports fields and pools. In the 15 years since the Auckland Council amalgamation, no new community facilities have been built that weren't already planned or budgeted by the former territorial authorities.

A total of 18 councils in New Zealand have had their credit ratings downgraded by Standard & Poors. This means the risk premium built into their capital raising will be higher. Add the potential for rates caps and local government funding is looking increasingly squeezed.

LOTTERY & GAMING FUNDING ARE UNCERTAIN

For many years, lottery and Class 4 gaming funding have played a

significant part in sport and recreation organisation's business models. With online gambling licences being tendered, we could see a shift away from traditional gambling (like TAB NZ or Lotto NZ). This may hurt current community grant funding streams².

Online gambling operators are not required to give profits to the community. As Minister van Velden put it, she doesn't want community groups to become dependent on online casino grants. But Sport NZ's 2022 report shows they already are.

THE CLUB & VOLUNTEER MODEL ISN'T FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Clubs and their volunteers have long been the backbone of community sport. We all know a club stalwart that's spent countless hours writing grant applications and organising raffles. They use their influence to advocate to funders to contribute to their facilities, programmes and operations. But the rising cost of facilities is outpacing what even the most dedicated volunteers can raise.



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Less bricks and mortar investment is being favoured by some community grant organisations. The Rātā Foundation, for example, has reframed its strategic funding with a more specific social wellbeing focus.

THERE ARE OPTIONS

Facing these funding challenges starts with a mindset shift. It's no longer viable — or responsible — to begin planning with an aspirational design and hope funding follows. Viability and fundability need to be embedded from the feasibility stage. Below are four opportunities that could help:

1. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH REGIONAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Most regions in New Zealand have established community foundations who look to attract endowments and bequests. In its 2025 Bequest Report, JB Were estimates inheritances will grow from \$27 billion in 2024 to \$1.6 trillion by 2050.

The report identifies: How this intergenerational wealth transfer, planned and managed by the current owners of these assets, will reshape society and present a powerful opportunity to increase legacy giving and improve outcomes for communities³.

If current levels of legacy giving increased to three percent, JB Were assesses annual pledges could reach nearly \$2.5 billion within 20 years.

Recent strides have been made with Momentum Waikato facilitating fundraising for the Waikato Regional Theatre, the Taranaki Foundation sourcing funding for Destination Kāwaroa, and the Auckland Foundation commencing fundraising for a new Nature Playground at Pukekawa / Auckland Domain. There is a huge opportunity to position partnerships with community foundations for regional investment in sport and recreation spaces and places. Accessing this wealth transfer for not only capital investment but also ongoing operational costs presents a significant opportunity.

2. MIGRATING TO MULTI-USE

This isn't a new one. Many commercial organisations such as banks have significantly reduced and centralised their physical footprint. The Covid-19 pandemic changed the way we shop, and it changed the retail platforms that support this.



Nature playground concept in Pukekawa, Auckland Domain. Image Auckland Council

Migrating from single occupancy to new multi-use spaces and places can divert inefficient renewal spend to contribute to multi-use facility business cases. Research in 2020 shows the residents in Auckland value integrated pools and leisure centres over standalone venues, to the value of \$4.44 per Auckland household per month.

Multi-use facilities may not always meet the specific need for elite competition. But they can offer more flexibility to provide for small sided games, and can be more adaptable for new and emerging sports and pay-to-play business models.

3. LEVERAGING DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS & TARGETED RATES

For regions in New Zealand facing population growth, development contributions can cover part of the capital funding puzzle. Development contribution funding can be applied in certain circumstances to lease arrangements. Leasing gives local authorities greater long-term flexibility in facility provision and can avoid being on the hook for all of the risk associated with site purchase and the non-growth proportion of budgets.

Most facility costs bite when the cost of annual operations kick in. While a potentially unpopular tool (at least initially), targeted rates offer the ability to specifically recover these operational costs and test public value in these investments through the public consultation process they require to establish.

4. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH MANA WHENUA & POST-TREATY SETTLEMENT ENTITIES

Young Māori tamariki and rangatahi participate the most of any ethnic group in total weekly physical activity⁴.

This offers a strengths-based platform to support and plan for coinvestment opportunities with mana whenua who have shown leadership in investing in this area. Look to the proposed Ngāti Whatua Hauora centre in Ōrākei as a potential example of coinvestment in wellbeing outcomes for whānau.

There are likely to be many other options that can be applied. Now is the time for a mindset shift and a long term investment strategy. ■

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Waikato Regional Theatre under construction. Image Momentum Waikato



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF **PUBLIC CONSERVATION LAND**

AN UPDATE ON POTENTIAL CONSERVATION LAW REFORMS

WORDS SAM NEWTON, RECREATION AOTEAROA ADVOCACY MANAGER

For those involved in parks and leisure across Australasia, it's essential to understand the significant role that government conservation agencies play in shaping outdoor recreation opportunities. In New Zealand, the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Conservation Act 1987 are central to how we access and enjoy our natural landscapes. DOC manages approximately one-third of New Zealand's landmass, a vast estate that underpins a large portion of our outdoor recreation, from hiking and mountain biking to fishing and snow sports.

Recently, DOC has undertaken two significant public consultations that could lead to important reforms of this foundational legislation. As the national organisation responsible for providing leadership and advocacy for the broader recreation sector, Recreation

Aotearoa has been actively involved in these discussions. This article provides an overview of these consultations and highlights the key issues for the recreation profession.

THE CORNERSTONES: DOC AND THE CONSERVATION ACT

Before diving into the consultations, it's crucial to appreciate the context. The Conservation Act 1987 established DOC and set out the principles for managing public conservation land. This Act not only prioritises the preservation and protection of natural and historic resources but also mandates providing for public appreciation and recreational enjoyment, where consistent with conservation values. With 80% of New Zealanders visiting public conservation lands and waters annually, the Act's influence on recreation is immense. DOC

itself spends over NZ\$200 million per year on providing recreational opportunities, placing it alongside major sporting bodies in terms of investment in this sector."

EXPLORING CHARGING FOR ACCESS TO SOME PUBLIC CONSERVATION LAND

One of the key consultation documents proposed exploring the possibility of charging visitors for access to some public conservation land. The government's rationale, as outlined in the discussion document, centres on rising costs for maintaining the visitor network and biodiversity, and a desire to find fairer ways for users to contribute. They also suggest that current legislation doesn't adequately allow for cost recovery from all users.

Recreation Aotearoa strongly believes that access to public

conservation land for New Zealanders should remain free. We argue that New Zealanders already contribute significantly through general taxation towards the management of these lands, which are considered a vital part of our national identity and collective well-being. Introducing access fees could create financial barriers, particularly for families, young people, and those on lower incomes, potentially turning shared natural spaces into exclusive domains.

Our submission emphasises that existing revenue tools should be fully optimised before considering broad access charges. These include the International Visitor Levy (IVL), concession fees, and targeted facility charges like car parking fees. We particularly highlighted the increased IVL and its potential to alleviate current funding pressures if effectively utilised. While we acknowledge DOC's financial constraints, we firmly oppose any fees that would limit New Zealanders' access to their own public lands.

Recreation Aotearoa has indicated mild support for charging international visitors as a last resort, but only if all other funding mechanisms have been exhausted and the revenue is transparently reinvested directly into the conservation and visitor infrastructure of the specific sites or regions where it was collected.



MODERNISING CONSERVATION LAND MANAGEMENT

The second consultation focused on modernising the broader conservation land management system, aiming to streamline processes and enable more flexibility. The government identified issues with the current system, including outdated legislation, complex and lengthy planning and concession processes, and limitations on land exchange and disposal. The proposals aimed to provide certainty for investment, cut processing times, focus on conservation objectives, enable more flexible land management, and clarify DOC's Treaty obligations.

Recreation Aotearoa acknowledges the need for an updated and streamlined framework. We support efforts to improve efficiency and transparency in land management and the concessions system. However, we emphasised that any changes must balance environmental protection, recreational use, public access, and financial sustainability. Our concern is that the discussion document did not sufficiently prioritise recreation and outdoor education outcomes.

A key area of our submission focused on the inconsistent application of concession requirements to non-profit outdoor education providers. Currently, these organisations often face the same concession application processes and costs as commercial tourism operators, despite operating for no commercial gain and providing significant social and developmental benefits, particularly for young people. We strongly advocated for placing non-profit outdoor education providers, including tertiary institutions, in the 'exempted activities' class of concessions, aligning their treatment with schools and other non-commercial entities.

We also stressed the importance of stronger partnerships with iwi and hapū, ensuring their role in conservation management is well-defined and effectively integrated. While welcoming the recognition of iwi as partners, we called for more specificity and detail on how these partnerships will operate and how DOC will give effect to Treaty principles consistently.

Regarding the proposals for more flexibility in land exchange and disposals, Recreation Aotearoa expressed caution, asserting that the threshold for such actions should be extremely high to avoid the loss of recreation and conservation values. We emphasised that public conservation land is a shared resource, and decisions should be guided by conservation, recreation, and community interests.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RECREATION IN NEW ZEALAND

The outcomes of these consultations could significantly reshape the landscape of outdoor recreation in Aotearoa. Streamlined planning and concession processes could potentially benefit recreation providers and users by reducing delays and costs. However, the introduction of access charges

for New Zealanders would likely create barriers to participation and could fundamentally alter the long-standing principle of free access to public conservation land.

ONGOING ADVOCACY BY RECREATION AOTEAROA

Recreation Aotearoa remains committed to advocating for fair and sustainable recreation opportunities on public conservation land. Through our submissions, we have championed the rights of all New Zealanders to enjoy the outdoors while ensuring our conservation estate is well-managed for future generations. We will continue to engage with DOC and the government as these proposals move forward.

CONCLUSION

The potential reforms to the Conservation Act 1987 in Aotearoa represent a crucial juncture for outdoor recreation. The discussions on charging and the modernisation of land management will have long-lasting effects on how locals and visitors alike experience our unique natural heritage.

For our colleagues in the Australasian parks and leisure sector, these developments underscore the fundamental connection between conservation policy and the provision of accessible and high-quality recreation opportunities. Understanding these processes and their potential outcomes is vital for anyone involved in shaping the future of outdoor engagement across our region. ■



OPPOSITE COASTS, TWO NEW PROJECTS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A SERIES OF NEW PLACES TO PLAY TO BE COMPLETED IN WA AND NSW

In Western Australia, Perth's newest planned recreational space is a seven-kilometre-long linear park being built under the Armadale train line.

To be known as Long Park, the space is comprised of six hectares of public open space that will stretch between the Carlisle and Beckenham train stations, which are newly constructed as part of the METRONET Victoria Park-Canning Level Crossing Removal project.

With the majority of the work expected to be completed in conjunction with the reopening of the rail line in mid-2025, the completed parkland will provide 14 community spaces and amenities, including:

- Four new playgrounds
- Two nature trail playspaces
- An iconic public art trail
- Two youth plazas with basketball, futsal and netball courts
- Three skate parks
- Two fitness parks with exercise equipment
- Two dog parks
- An extensive path network for bike riding and walking
- New spaces for pop-up cafes and community events
- Thousands of native trees, plants and shrubs that will more than double the number of trees currently within the corridor

Long Park will also be home to Perth's longest public art trail, with over 20 public artworks set to be installed along its length, including unique designs on 70 of the railway's piers.

Noongar shield designs have been etched into screenings and retaining walls, while First Nations designs will be integrated into paving, shelters and seating. Each station will have graphic patterns and text embedded into surfaces, with Cannington showcasing dynamic screen art and lighting.

A statement piece at Queens Park Station will celebrate Noongar themes of truth-telling and healing. Unique graphic designs will appear on surfaces in activation zones, youth plazas and on 70 of the piers along the rail corridor to

form part of the line-wide art trail.

Artworks by Western-Australian artists will be themed around *healing and revealing*, with the aim of fostering learning, storytelling and shared experiences that also reflect the unique elements of each area along the line.

"Landscaping is also an integral part of the design for the public space, with thousands of native trees, plants and shrubs to be planted, more than doubling the number of trees that currently exist within the corridor," said Transport Minister Rita Saffioti.

"Right across the world we've seen how rail corridors are redeveloped into usable public spaces for the community to enjoy, and the Armadale Line upgrades will be another great example of how we can transform these spaces and unlock new housing opportunities." The public spaces include:

- **Mungyte Place** | A multigenerational space with a range of activities including a playground, bocce court, performance lawn, barbecue area, exercise equipment and integrated artworks.
- **Banksia Discovery Trail** | A series of informal pathways and clearings woven through native planting to create an integrated nature play trail that tells the story of the banksia.
- **Fitness Park** | Fitness Park is an outdoor gym for programmed and individual exercise, providing accessible fitness equipment for circuit-style training.
- **Puggie Playground** | A nature playground that tells the story of the echidna through integrated First Nations artworks. Play opportunities include climbing structures, swings, tunnels and balance walks.
- **Oats Street Youth Plaza** | A youth plaza incorporating a 3x3 basketball court and a low-level hybrid skate park suitable for all skill levels.
- **Railway Dog Park** | A dog exercise area with two fenced zones featuring airlock gates, seating, informal agility elements and a drinking fountain.
- **Water HQ** | A central gathering space and outdoor classroom for use by surrounding schools.

Integrated artworks and interpretive signage tell the story of water across the site.

- **Youran Playspace** | A small seating area and playspace focusing on integrated First Nations artworks representing the bobtail lizard.
- **Queens Park Community Hub** | An inviting, flexible space nestled in the parklands. Located between Queens Park Station and the Railway Playground, the wide-open lawns, seating, BBQs and picnic tables provide opportunities for everyday use and a wide variety of events.
- **Cannington Youth Plaza** | A youth orientated zone incorporating a full-size futsal and basketball court, a netball court and a hybrid skate park.
- **Railyard Playground** | A playground that draws on the rich history of the train line, with a focus on the timber transported from the south-west. Play opportunities include climbing structures, and an interpretive locomotive play element with slide and water play.
- **Basin Park** | A small park with seating around the Woodlupine Book drain designed to enhance the existing drain and create a vegetated basin.
- **Beckenham Dog Park** | A dog exercise area with seating.
- **Wheels Park** | A community space for activities including a bike pump track, and a *wheels* loop with integrated obstacles for skateboards, scooters and skates. ■



“ MEANWHILE, IN NEW SOUTH WALES, GRIFFITH COUNCIL IS GETTING TO WORK ON TWO NEW PARKS ”

Griffith City Council has commenced the construction of two new parks at Lake Wyangan Picnic Area and Tharbogang Village, as part of its commitment to providing high-quality public spaces that promote outdoor recreation, community connection and inclusivity.

The Lake Wyangan picnic area will soon feature a newly developed park designed to enhance the foreshore.

Planned elements include:

- A modern playground with diverse play equipment catering to all age groups.
- Shaded seating areas and picnic facilities for families and visitors.
- Improved landscaping to blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings.
- Accessibility enhancements to ensure inclusivity for all members of the community.

The new Tharbogang Park will create a vibrant and engaging play environment for the village. Council says the new park will feature:

- A thoughtfully designed playground that encourages creative and explorative play.
- Inclusive elements to ensure kids of all abilities can enjoy the space.
- Seating areas and shaded zones to support community gatherings.
- Landscaping that enhances the aesthetic and environmental quality of the area.

The park's design has incorporated valuable community feedback to ensure it meets local needs. "These new parks at Lake Wyangan and Tharbogang Village reflect Council's commitment to enhancing recreational opportunities for our residents," states Mayor Doug Curran.

"We are proud to invest in spaces that will provide enjoyment for families, children and the broader community for years to come."

Construction on these projects is currently underway, with completion expected by the end of June 2025. ■



INTERNATIONAL NEWS



2025

AUSTRALIAN GOLF

Golf in Australia



Value of Golf

\$3.3b
Community Benefits

Golf derives significant benefits for Australians and the economy. In 2023 golf contributed:

- Economic benefits \$1.4b
- Social benefits \$1b
- Environmental benefits \$900m

Local Governments and Venues can calculate their own community benefits through the Benefits Dashboard (use QR code below).

3.8m
Participation

Participation is booming, growing 9% in 2023/24 (*adults).

- 459,143 Club members, 5.6% ↑
- 1,840,857 Round players*, 4% ↑
- 690,000 Outdoor hitters*, 12% ↑
- 175,000 Indoor hitters*, 13% ↑
- 640,000 Mini golfers*, 28% ↑
- 36,643 MyGolfers juniors, 10.7% ↑
- 18,302 Get Into Golfers*, 21% ↑

On average new golfers are 10 years younger and 49% are women.

1,749
Venues

Venues are evolving to meet the diverse experiences sought out by participants. There are 2,001 unique facilities located across 1,749 venues in Australia in 2025:

- 1,408 golf courses
- 35 short courses (28*)
- 193 driving ranges (63*)
- 185 simulator venues (141*)
- 180 mini golf courses (109*)

(*located at multi facility venues)

GOLF'S BOOM & BENEFITS 2023/24

- 3.8m** Australians adults hit a golf ball
- 9%** Growth in participation
- 51%** Women playing off-course formats
- 41y** Golfer average trending younger
- 7.1%** Happier are adult golfers, 13% club members
- 5y** Golfers live 5 years longer
- 19.2** Laps of the Earth walked by Golfers daily
- 7.23m** Aussies use golf venues for non-golf activities

Our Purpose & Advocacy Priorities

- Our Purpose: More Australians Playing More Golf
- Off-Course Facility Development meeting new golfer needs
- Championing golf course land, protecting valuable assets
- Working Together with Local Governments to maximise benefits
- Grow and support our volunteer and paid workforce
- Community to elite level participation pathways and events



BENEFITS REPORT WEBSITE

Community Benefits of Golf in Australia

ECONOMIC BENEFITS **\$1.4b**

SOCIAL BENEFITS **\$1.0b**

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS **\$900m**



NO BALL GAMES

A UK STUDY SHOWS CHILDREN ARE PLAYING OUTSIDE FAR LESS AMID A “NO BALL GAMES” CULTURE

WORDS POPPY WOOD, EDUCATION EDITOR, THE TELEGRAPH, UK

A “no ball games” culture and increasing smartphone use mean play is being “squeezed out” of children’s lives, new research has found. A report by the Raising the Nation Play Commission warned that restrictions on outdoor recreation have resulted in children spending less time on traditional play activities.

The study, produced in partnership with the Centre for Young Lives charity, pointed at the “brazen” use of “no ball games” signs in many communal spaces and a growing trend of “noise and disruption complaints” from neighbours. It said these have helped fuel a “culture hostile to young people and their freedom to roam” over the past few decades in England, as it called for Government intervention to help boost children’s access to play.

Researchers spoke to 55 experts and analysed 150 pieces of written testimony following a call for evidence last year to scrutinise falling play levels among children. This followed a 2018 report by the Real Play Coalition showing that children’s time spent playing outdoors had dropped 50 percent in a single generation. A 2023 survey by Play England also found that just 27 percent of children said they regularly played on the street outside their homes. That compared to 81 percent of adults aged 55 to 64 who remembered doing so during their childhood.

The Raising the Nation Play Commission said the drop was likely fuelled by increasing crime concerns, more traffic and new “distractions and demands” on children’s lives. Researchers said this included the growing dominance of smartphones, social media and gaming, which they warned were “filling the void left by the time children used to spend playing outdoors”.



“There are now so many barriers restricting play. More cars on the roads (both parked and moving), the closure of playgrounds, the dominance of screentime, shortened school breaktimes, and a default use of no ball games signs in so many communal spaces, are all restrictions to children’s freedom and opportunities to play,” the report said. “As a result, children are spending less time outdoors than previous generations, less time socialising with friends, and less time playing.”

Paul Lindley, chair of the Play Commission, also voiced concerns that “the education system has been subtly encouraged to devalue the tool of play in learning” over the past few decades.

The report analysed surveys carried out in 1995, 2006, 2017 and 2021 and found a significant decline in average daily breaktime in England’s schools.

“Play is absolutely vital to child development and to us as human beings. It teaches us so many life

skills... yet the opportunities for play have just been decimated over the last 15 years or so,” Paul states. He adds there were a multitude of reasons behind the decline, including the closure of playgrounds and youth centres, with 400 playgrounds closing across the country between 2012 and 2022. He also said increased traffic, technology, and the use of no ball games signs could be behind the trend. “Kids learn so many skills from play. They are less healthy and less happy than they’ve ever been.”

Mr Lindley called on the government to “lead from the top” with the creation of a National Play Strategy for England. The Commission also called for new Department of Education guidance to ring-fence playtime in the school day, as well as for school staff to be trained in the benefits of play.

A Department spokesperson noted: “Schools are best placed to develop and implement their behaviour policies

as well as how to organise their school day. We are committed to making sure every child has the best start in life through our Plan for Change and working to ensure that all children and young people have access to a variety of enrichment opportunities at school.”

Today, on average, children aged five to seven get 23 minutes less daily lunchtime and classroom breaks compared to their peers in 1995, researchers found. Those aged eight to 11 are given around 18 fewer minutes for breaktimes each day compared to three decades ago, while children aged 11 to 16 enjoy 17 minutes less. It means children in secondary schools in England are now awarded less than an hour each day for their total breaktime between classes.

Baroness Longfield, executive chairman of the Centre for Young Lives and a former children’s commissioner for England, claims: “Generations of children are now growing up spending less time playing, less time outside, less time with their friends, and more time inside, glued to phones and social media. Play is being squeezed out of their lives, and the consequences for their mental and physical health, and their development, are dire.”

Tackling the decline in play would help address a growing national obesity crisis and improve children’s happiness levels, the report states. It called on the Government to ring-fence time within the school day for breaks and long lunches and to review the use of “no ball games” signs in communities.

The Commission also urged ministers to roll out new advice for teachers discouraging the “withdrawal of playtime as punishment for bad behaviour” and to measure children’s access to play as part of school inspections. The report said a new national curriculum highlighting the

importance of playtime would also help move away from a “narrow emphasis on rote learning and examinations, reinforced by a highly pressurised accountability system”.

Pepe Di’lasio, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: “Playtime has a very important role both inside and outside of school, but schools are constantly having to juggle multiple pressures on the time that is available because they have to deliver a packed curriculum. If we want to create more time for play in schools, we have to balance this against all the other expectations we have of schools.” ■



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GROWING HEALTHY PLACES

MISSISSAUGA TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACROSS THE CITY

WORDS NOVO NORDISK

A collaboration initiative between 8 80 Cities, Ophea, Brock University and Novo Nordisk Canada Inc. recently announced a new partnership to support children's health and wellbeing. *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* aims to improve physical activity, access to nourishing food and overall quality of life in underserved urban communities.

Bringing together partners such as school communities, municipal governments, academic institutions and non-profit organisations, the initiative will support the city of Mississauga, Canada, in the co-design, implementation and evaluation of tailored solutions that meet community needs.

QUICK STATS

- Many children in Canada lack access to adequate and healthy food¹.
- Only 39 percent of children and adolescents (5-17 years old) get sufficient physical activity².
- Community interventions aim to increase quality of life, physical activity and access to nourishing food among children.
- Three-year partnership aims to benefit school-aged children (6-13 years old).

Food insecurity among children and youth has increased in Canada¹. In 2022, 18 percent of Canadian families reported experiencing food insecurity in the past 12 months, with families living in urban areas and from racialised and immigrant populations disproportionately affected³. Further, only half of children aged 5-11 years old meet the recommended physical activity levels².

These challenges in childhood can impact long-term health outcomes and quality of life³. Promoting access to nourishing food and physical activity in childhood is critical to support healthy growth and development and to reduce the risk of developing a range of health issues into adulthood, including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea, cancer and depression⁴.

Prioritising initiatives that promote physical activity, access to nourishing food and improved quality of life has the potential to make a substantial difference in supporting children's wellbeing, improving lifelong health and strengthening communities. Through evidence-based interventions, co-designed within communities to deliver real and sustained impact, *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* will support the health of school-aged children

by building a portfolio of initiatives to increase access to nutritious food and safe places to be physically active.

To achieve this, we are engaging communities, fostering trust and building respectful relationships among key service providers to co-create environments that better support the wellbeing of children. This three-year partnership will be tracked and evaluated at three different time points into 2027.

Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga is the Canadian implementation of Novo Nordisk's global Cities for Better Health (CBH) Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative (COPI), which will see six cities across six countries prioritise cross-sector partnerships with the goal of promoting health and overall wellbeing among children and youth.

PARTNER STATEMENTS

"In a city as diverse as Mississauga, we know that equal access to healthy food, safe spaces for physical activity and opportunities to thrive should never depend on a child's postal code or economic background. *Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga* is more than an initiative; it's a commitment to addressing the systemic barriers that prevent too many children from





Community gardens could be one of the programs implemented by the initiative

reaching their full potential. By working together with our community partners, we're taking meaningful steps to create a future where every child in Mississauga has the opportunity to grow up healthy, confident and ready to succeed." — Mayor Carolyn Parrish, City of Mississauga

"The announcement of the Cities for Better Health initiative to improve health outcomes for children globally is exciting news for Mississauga. Our city is always exploring new ways to keep residents healthy and active, and partnering with Cities for Better Health is a meaningful step toward achieving this vision. I look forward to the implementation phase and the collaboration of all community partners working together to make a real impact." — Ward 9 Councillor Martin Reid, City of Mississauga.

"We're thrilled to be working on this exciting project and partnership that aims to improve the health outcomes for children in Mississauga. Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga will directly engage communities in the co-design of neighbourhood-based initiatives that will provide valuable research and insights that directly support our healthy city advocacy efforts and position Mississauga as a healthy city leader." — Amanda O'Rourke, Executive Director, 8 80 Cities.

"I was attracted to this project by the community-driven and intersectoral approach to promoting children's health. Central to the evaluation is a focus on whether the interventions impact inequitable distribution of health outcomes over time. The evidence gained, and the project's focus on sustainability and scale up, will support the promotion of healthy communities well beyond the study, helping to ensure all children have the opportunity to thrive." — Karen A Patte, PhD, Canada Research Chair in Child Health Equity and Inclusion, Associate Professor, Health Sciences, Brock University.

"Every child deserves the right to grow up healthy, regardless of who they are or where they live. The best way to improve physical activity, healthy eating and overall quality of life is with collaborative, evidence-based approaches like Growing Healthy Places: Mississauga, which Novo Nordisk is proud to partner on." — Vince Lamanna, President, Novo Nordisk Canada Inc. ■

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ABOUT OPHEA

Ophea is a registered charity that champions healthy, active living in schools and communities through quality programs and services, partnerships and advocacy. Since 1921, Ophea has worked in partnership with school boards, public health, government, non-government organisations and companies to develop ground-breaking programs and services. Its vision is that children and youth value and enjoy the benefits of healthy, active living.

ABOUT 8 80 CITIES

8 80 Cities is a nonprofit organisation based in Toronto, Canada. Its mission is to ignite action and challenge the status quo to create healthier, more equitable and sustainable cities for all people. The organisation is dedicated to contributing to the transformation of cities into places where people can walk, bike, access public transit and visit vibrant parks and public places. Its approach is to engage people and communities across multiple sectors to inspire the creation of cities that are easily accessible, safe and enjoyable for all. 8 80 Cities achieves its mission through grant projects, research and advocacy, and innovative services.

ABOUT BROCK UNIVERSITY

Brock University is a comprehensive institution with rich academic programs and world-class research activity. Located in Ontario's scenic Niagara region on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, Brock is situated in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. With nearly 600 full-time faculty members and researchers, Brock's robust academic scope offers more than 70 undergraduate programs and 50 graduate programs in seven dynamic faculties. The University's 19,000 students come from across Canada and around the world. Brock's renowned student experience is enriched by an emphasis on experiential education, as illustrated by community partnerships, volunteerism and one of Ontario's largest and most successful co-op programs.

ABOUT NOVO NORDISK

Novo Nordisk is a leading global healthcare company founded in 1923 and headquartered in Denmark. Our purpose is to drive change to defeat serious chronic diseases, built upon our heritage in diabetes. We do so by pioneering scientific breakthroughs, expanding access to our medicines and working to prevent and ultimately cure disease. Novo Nordisk employs about 63,400 people in 80 countries and markets its products in around 170 countries.



THE GREEN OASIS OF SEVILLE

THE MARIA LUISA PARK IN SEVILLE IS THE
PERFECT PLACE TO WALK WITH NATURE

Located in the city of Seville, Spain, María Luisa Park is a large park full of vegetation that has a great variety of gazebos, fountains, sculptures, trees, bushes, flowers and plants.

The park is a wonderful open public garden in the city of Seville and is both the great ecological lung of this beautiful city and a historical space. It is a real meeting point for people who like to enjoy the outdoors, stroll, listen to music and relax.

In 1848, the Duke of Montpensier, Antonio de Orleans, and his wife, the Infanta María Luisa Fernanda de Borbon, took up residence in Seville, eventually acquiring the Palace of San Telmo in 1850. The dukes chose the French gardener André Lecolant to design the gardens of their palace, Isabela and San Diego.

The land was located between the old Dos Hermanas road, next to the Prado de San Sebastián, and the Paseo del Río and Paseo de las Delicias. The kiosk of the Isleta de los Pájaros (current pavilion of Alfonso XII) dates from this period. It is bordered to the north by Cristina's gardens and to the south by Mariana's orchards. On 19 June 1893, María Luisa, already a widow, ceded a large part of the San Telmo gardens to the city.

Until 1910, no major work was carried out in this area. The only work of note was in 1893 with the construction of the Queen's Dressing Room, the work of architect Juan Talavera y de la Vega, and a greenhouse with a metal structure.

The Duke of Montpensier commissioned the architect Francisco Noguera to remodel and enlarge his

palace in 1900. Among these projects was the creation of a large garden, formerly known as Sapatario, located on the site of an old sugar mill, which was destroyed in 1883.

At the beginning, the Parque de María Luisa was built from the backyards of the gardens of the Palacio de San Telmo. When the young duchess, María Luisa Fernanda de Borbón, was widowed around 1893, she decided to give it to the city of Seville.

The French landscape architect Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestier transformed María Luisa Park. What were already palace gardens became a public park with more monumental and recreational spaces. Forestier did not impose French classicism on his work, adapting his designs to the climate and landscape of the city.

From his travels around the country, Jean-Claude perfectly captured in the park influences from the Alhambra in Granada, the Generalife, the Retiro Park in Madrid and, within the city itself, the Alcazar of Seville and some Sevillian manor houses, while maintaining respect for the existing trees and, in general, respecting with great delicacy the "sensitivity to naturalness" and "sensitivity to the landscape" that surrounds each element.

Thanks to the 1929 Universal Exposition, the park radically transformed several pavilions before its inauguration. The most significant were:

- **Plaza de España (Spain Square)** | The main work of Anibal Gonzalez, among the magnificent buildings of regionalist structures, a navigable canal has been built where you can rent a boat, and the benches of the square represent all the provinces of Spain, and also some busts of famous Spaniards on its walls. Plaza de España has been a good place to shoot many movies: Lawrence of Arabia, Mission Impossible, Starwars and Game of Thrones.
- **Plaza de America** | Also known as Plaza de las Palomas, this space is where the headquarters of the Mudejar pavilion of the Art Gallery of the Disciplines and Customs of Seville was located and, on the other side of the square, we see the old Pavilion of the Arts, now the Provincial Archaeological Museum. In front of it is the Royal Pavilion and also the hotel where the Eritaña Civil Guard is located.

There are other pavilions, such as the well-known Domecq Pavilion. A

neoclassical brick building designed by architect Aurelio Gómez Millán located near the Glorieta de Covadonga, as well as the pavilion of the Bodega de Jerez Domecq during the Ibero-American Exposition of 1929.

The Glorieta de Becquer is located in Maria Luisa Park. The white marble monument dedicated to the romantic poet Gustavo Bécquer was born in Seville and lived there until his death in 1875. He wrote romantic poetry and his works are known for their poetic evocations of nature, rural life and passion.

Immense poet Adolfo Bécquer is honoured with this statue symbolising poetic inspiration in Seville. Although he had no formal education and did not even learn to read until the age of nine, his parents supported his artistic inclinations and encouraged him to begin composing poetry at a very young age. His work as a poet has been described as "poetic, magical... beautiful".

Maria Luisa Park is a very well-known place because it houses numerous statues and monuments, with many different landmarks. Among them are: Monte Gurugú, Isleta de los Pájaros, Fuente de las Ranas, Glorieta Hermanos

Álvarez Quintero, Glorieta de Bécquer, Plaza América, Plaza de España, Museo Arqueológico, Glorieta de San Diego and Glorieta de Aníbal González. ■



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RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

This edition of *Research Connections* provides eight articles that have been assessed as being of value for the delivery of park and leisure experiences. Two Australian articles explore issues related to sport club participation and two articles deal with older adult's use of parks (insights from these articles were shared in Professor Pazit Levinger's Parks Week presentation). Three international articles provide information about physical activity and active living, and one article explores the importance of indigenous events.

AUSTRALIA

SELF-ASSESSED HEALTH OF ADULT AUSTRALIAN SPORT CLUB PARTICIPANTS DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY (2025)

Authors Rochelle Eime, Jack Harvey & Melanie Charity

Abstract *Background:* Internationally, COVID-19 restrictions impacted negatively on participation in sport and physical activity. Participation in community club sport was particularly disrupted with cancelled training and competitions, and this has been shown to impact the health of individuals. We now need to investigate the effects of the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. *Aim:* The aim of this study was to longitudinally investigate the health of Australian adult sports club participants, during and post-COVID-19 restrictions. *Methods:* Two waves of an online survey were conducted in mid-2020 and mid-2021. The first wave also captured retrospective pre-COVID19 (2019) data. For each year 2019–2021 each survey respondent was categorized as participating (Yes/No) in club sport. Respondents also assessed their current health (overall, physical and mental) in both 2020 and 2021. The six health assessments were cross-tabulated against three patterns of participation (dropout, dropout and return, continuation), for the survey sample overall and for six demographic subsamples: 42 crosstabulations in all. *Results:* A total of 1,037 Australians aged 18 years and above completed both survey waves. Those who continued

playing club sport throughout, and to a lesser degree those who returned to club sport in 2021, reported better physical and general health than those who dropped out. This pattern was consistent, for the overall survey sample and for the sub-samples based on gender, age and region of residence, with statistically significant associations ($p < 0.05$) in 24 of 28 analyses. The pattern of club sport participation was only weakly associated with reported mental health, with only one of 14 associations being statistically significant. *Conclusion:* Changes in club sport participation impact general and physical health of adults; continuation or return were associated with better physical and general health than drop-out. There was little evidence of an association between participation in sport and mental health, which is inconsistent with previously reported cross-sectional results; this may be due to a combination of factors, including confounding with the broader effects of the pandemic. In conclusion, it is clear that retention in participation in sport is not just important for sports management policy and strategies; it is also important for the health of individuals.

Publication BMC Public Health. 25:353

Download biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-025-21601-1

Cost FREE

AUSTRALIAN MENTAL HEALTH IN COMMUNITY SPORT (2025)

Author Stewart Anthony Vella, Caitlin Liddelow, Simon Rice & Christian Swann

Abstract *Objective:* The need for clear and actionable guidelines for the promotion and protection of mental health in organised community sport has previously been identified. This study aimed to provide guidelines to promote and protect mental health in organised community sport in Australia. *Methods:* Guideline development was informed by (1) systematic reviews of the evidence pertaining to existing mental health guidelines in sport and mental health interventions in community sport; (2) an expert Delphi consensus study and (3) key stakeholder input via focus groups. A Guideline Development Committee

comprising experts and key stakeholder representatives articulated nine distinct guidelines. *Results:* These guidelines address the areas of: mental health literacy training; mental health support pathways and processes; responding to mental health emergencies; responding to major events that may impact mental health; having a mental health plan in place; reducing stigmatising attitudes; appointing a dedicated mental health champion; coach education and promoting well-being within the organisation. *Conclusions:* We provide guidance for promoting and protecting mental health in community sport. Monitoring uptake and measuring the effectiveness of the guidelines are important areas of future work to advance positive mental health for everybody involved in community sport.

Publication British Journal of Sports Medicine. 19 February 2025.

Download doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2024-108749

Cost FREE

OLDER PEOPLE'S VIEWS AND USAGE OF RECREATIONAL SPACES IN PARKS WITH AGE-FRIENDLY OUTDOOR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT (2025)

Authors Pazit Levinger, Bronwyn L Dreher, Briony Dow, Frances Batchelor & Keith D Hill

Abstract Recreational spaces are important public spaces for people of all ages to engage in leisure and physical activities. However, older people remain one of the lowest users of park. This study investigated older people's perceptions and reasons for visiting parks that have undergone refurbishment with the installation of age-friendly outdoor exercise equipment, the Seniors Exercise Park. On-site intercept surveys took place in six parks in Victoria, Australia. Seniors Exercise Park equipment usage was audited over 12 months using on-site Quick Response (QR). A total of 139 older people were surveyed, 55.4 percent reported visiting to exercise, 25.9 percent for walking and 21.5 percent for fresh air/nature. Proximity to home/family (37.4%) and the availability of the Seniors Exercise Park equipment (36.7%) were the main reasons for

visiting these parks. The availability of age-suitable exercise equipment in recreational spaces can support and encourage older people to access local parks and engage in physical activity.

Publication Int J Environ Health Res. 2025 Jan;35(1):81-93

Download doi.org/10.1080/09603123.2024.2342021

Cost \$64 (USD)

RECREATIONAL SPACES: HOW BEST TO DESIGN AND CATER FOR OLDER PEOPLE'S SAFE ENGAGEMENT IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (2025)

Authors Pazit Levinger, Ric Mcconaghy, Bronwyn Dreher, Lisa James, Marcia Fearn, Tessa McKenna, Mairead Hallissey & Keith D Hill

Abstract Recreational spaces, such as local parks, are important public spaces for the community to engage in various activities. With the global ageing population, the concept of multigenerational recreational spaces has become popular in recent years with the aim to design active spaces to cater for all age groups, including older people. However, designing multigenerational spaces that enable safe usage by older people can be challenging due to the competing interests and needs of different age groups. This paper is a reflective narrative describing four case studies of multigenerational outdoor spaces in Melbourne, Australia with the inclusion of age-friendly equipment and analysing parks layout and design using aerial imagery data. Factors impacting safe usage of the space by older people were identified and discussed. The main challenges identified in the recreational case study areas included: proximity of the seniors' exercise area relative to children's play-spaces, accessibility, layout of the area, and surrounding features which can pose potential safety risks for older people or be a deterrent for visiting the parks. The information described in this paper provides practical learnings relating to park layout, proximity of different spaces, and strategies that may be required to be implemented to facilitate safe usage of the space by older people for better multigenerational design. A

national recreational age-friendly policy is also needed to provide overarching guidelines to assist local governments in the design and delivery of inclusive multigenerational recreational spaces.

Publication Population Ageing (2025)

Download doi.org/10.1007/s12062-024-09472-7

Cost FREE

INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL OF HEALTHY EATING & ACTIVE LIVING (2024)

The Journal of Healthy Eating and Active Living (JHEAL) has recently published the annual Active Living Conference Special Issue. This free-to-read open-source academic journal includes outstanding papers and topics from the 2024 Active Living Conference. Top papers from the upcoming 2025 conference will be published in an upcoming special issue later in 2025. Thank you JHEAL for your support of Active Living!

Publication Vol 4, No 3

Download profpubs.com/index.php/jheal/issue/view/13

Cost FREE

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, THE PAST, PRESENT AND POTENTIAL FUTURE: A STATE-OF-THE-ART REVIEW (2025)

Author Matthew McLaughlin, Perter McCue, Brittany Swelam, Joey Murphy & Sarah Edney

Abstract This is a state-of-the-art review of historical developments, current approaches and recommended future directions in physical activity (PA) research, practice and policy. Since the early epidemiological studies in the 1950s, PA research has developed from within a biomedical paradigm. There is now a strong evidence base linking PA with positive health outcomes. PA is currently understood as a multi-sector issue, requiring a multi-sector solution (eg. transport, urban design, sport), resulting in multiple individual and societal benefits (eg. addresses multiple Sustainable Development Goals), however, there is a disconnect between interventions, policy and practice. This

may be due to limited cross-sector collaboration between, and within, the public and private sectors. Furthermore, the mix of policy instruments employed by governments to implement PA policy to date has been dominated by soft (eg. communication) rather than hard options (eg. fiscal). To progress in PA promotion, we need to move beyond health outcome and intervention evidence generation (eg. focus on testing efficacy in highly controlled settings), to more complex, real world, politically informed, multi-sector, scale-up and policies, while concurrently collecting data to evaluate such efforts (eg. natural experiments and evaluations of the policy process). PA programs may benefit from greater incorporation of public policy considerations, so that proposed interventions and policies are designed with potential political constraints in mind. We conclude by providing a call to action to advance the understanding of the role of politics in PA, in order to develop politically informed action on PA. .

Publication Health Promotion International, Volume 40, Issue 1, February 2025.

Download doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daae175

Cost FREE

WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE NATION AND EVEN BETTER FOR YOU? (2025)

Author Andrew Spiers

Introduction The answer to the riddle in the title is easy — sport and physical activity. At Sport England we're always talking about the benefits of being active, but for nerds like me, the past few months have provided a particular treasure trove of data about the social and economic value of sport and physical activity. And then on 1 October 2024, DCMS published a new Sport Satellite Account for the UK. [this provides a summary of publications about relevant UK statistics]. The conclusion from all this information is clear — tackling inequality is a challenge that we must address with all our energy and resources. And it doesn't stop there. In the past couple of weeks, we've also been able to provide two further reports about how the social

value of adult participation in sport and physical activity is distributed between local areas, and an overall return on investment figure for the social and economic value of community sport and physical activity in England. Local values range from £72 million in the small local authority area of Rutland, in the East Midlands, up to £1.6b in the large metropolitan area of Birmingham. We've also found out that for every £1 spent on community sport and physical activity, £4.20 of social and economic value is created.

Publication Sport England.
27 February 2025

Download sportengland.org/blogs/whats-good-nation-and-even-better-you

Cost FREE

BEYOND CULTURAL RENAISSANCE: INDIGENOUS EVENTS AS SITES OF RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE (2025)

Authors Trudie Walters & Diane Ruwhiu

Abstract The rising of the Matariki constellation (also known as Pleiades) is a special time for Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand for remembering the dead, celebrating the present, and preparing the ground for the coming year. Its observation had all but ceased by 1940, but it has experienced a resurgence since the 1990s. Previous longitudinal research into media narratives about Matariki events concluded that they acted as an expression of empowerment for Māori. In a time marked by heightened hostility towards 'things Māori', we ask how media narratives frame Matariki as a site of resistance, renaissance and resilience. We analyse media narratives from 2020 to 2024 using a qualitative kaupapa Māori framework. We find they have begun to connect the issues facing contemporary Māori with colonization, and make them more visible. Through the lens of Matariki, the Aotearoa NZ media are moving towards portraying a more accurate 'reality' of the contemporary Māori lifeworld.

Publication Annals of Leisure Research, 1–18

Download doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2025.2490516

Cost FREE

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.

PLA ADVISORY

WORDS STEPH MCCALLUM-KEILY, PLA ADVISORY MEMBER

It has been a busy year so far for PLA Advisory. This article provides an update on a couple of Advisory activities and initiatives.

WORLD LEISURE DAY

World Leisure Day occurred on 16 April 2025. This day is auspiced by World Leisure Organisation, with the 2025 theme being Leisure for a Better Society. Advisory hosted a webinar with guests Dr Hazel Maxwell, Neal Amed and David Burns under the topic Leisure Programs to Address Social Issues. Issues discussed included:

- The principles that underpin the delivery of leisure experiences as an agent of social change;
- The roles of park and leisure organisations in the delivery of programs to address social issues; and
- Examples of successful and unsuccessful leisure programs to address social issues.

Thank you to the guests and webinar attendees who contributed to PLA's first World Leisure Day event.

MANAGING PARKS AND LEISURE COST INCREASES

This project continues to be a priority initiative for Advisory and is developing well. Following on from a successful workshop held at the 2024 National Conference, a preliminary report has been prepared that outlines some key assumptions, including that we are unable to influence construction cost increases, we need to maximise use of existing facilities, and that we are focusing on community level sport and activities while primarily considering the perspective of local government.

Advisory members presented at the two regional conferences held in May – NSW/ACT and QLD, and VIC/TAS.

Advisory is seeking to provide guidance to the industry on what steps members can take to reduce or manage their capital expenditure costs for recreation infrastructure, with the aim to produce a guideline document for distribution. PLA Advisory intends to launch the guidelines at the PLA National Conference later in the year.

Potential next steps include calling for opportunities for partnerships and collaboration as well as case studies and profiling modular and multipurpose designs.

PARKS AND LEISURE INDUSTRY AND UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

This project is progressing well since the session held at the 2023 National Conference. The ultimate aim of this project is to increase the number of high-quality people entering the parks and leisure industry. Resource documents have been prepared from input from the working group and Advisory members and placed on the PLA Website. This includes information on student placement arrangements, building relationships, a database on Australian university courses and research centres, benefits and costs of student placements, research collaboration and case studies. It is intended that website content and resources will be updated annually. Presentations on this project also occurred at the NSW/ACT and QLD, and VIC/TAS conferences in May 2025.

Thank you to all that have contributed to this project through discussions and input.

MID-YEAR PLANNING MEETING

The PLA Advisory team come together in person twice a year; mid-year and at the National Conference. It is a great chance to build upon progress from monthly meetings, have deeper discussions and build connections among the team – especially as we are dispersed across Australia. We will soon come together in Melbourne for our 2025 mid-year planning meeting. At this meeting the group will discuss priority initiatives in addition to planning our session for the National Conference.

ADVISORY MEMBERS & FEEDBACK

PLA Advisory has recently updated its profile on the PLA website, you can find it under the About Us tab. Here you can read more about the members of Advisory, our focus and priorities.

It has been a pleasure to serve on PLA Advisory for two years working with passionate and insightful colleagues –

John Tower (Chair), John Senior, Neal Ames, Cathy Kiss, Laura Shaw, Lucilla Marshall, Wendy Holland and Anand Pillay. I look forward to the remaining Advisory initiatives and activities upcoming in 2025. ■

JOIN THE PLA ADVISORY

We welcome any feedback on our activities and additionally welcome comments on matters of importance to PLA members and the industry. Are you interested in joining the PLA Advisory team?

Please contact John Tower, Chair, PLA Advisory john.tower@vu.edu.au to express your interest.

UPCOMING COURSES & EVENTS

PLA EVENTS

NSW/ACT: 2025 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE GALA DINNER

12 June 2025

Doltone House, Sydney

parksleisure.com.au/event/nsw-act-2025-awards-of-excellence/

PLA WA REGIONAL CONFERENCE & AWARDS GALA

17-18 June 2025

Pan Pacific Perth, Western Australia

parksleisure.com.au/event/pla-wa-region-conference-awards

PLA SA/NT REGION CONFERENCE

11 July 2025

The Precinct Innovation Hub,

Fortitude Valley, Queensland

parksleisure.com.au/awards-of-excellence-qld/

AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL SPORTS & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CONVENTION 2025

25-26 June 2025

Melbourne Convention and

Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Victoria

nationalsportsconvention.com.au/

INTERNATIONAL

IUCN AT THE UN OCEAN CONFERENCE, 2025 (UNOC)

9-13 June 2025

Nice, France

sdgs.un.org/conferences/ocean2025

ANZALS 2025

1-4 December 2025

UTS Business School,

Ultimo, Sydney

anzals.org.au/conference/2025-sydney/

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- Discover what seminars and events are going on in your area



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- Access quick, up-to-the-minute conference news
- Speak one-on-one to managers in your PLA community about your organisation's projects



LINKEDIN

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