



Land Management Strategy

Protecting our natural and cultural heritage
for future generations

September 2022



Supporting
Nature's
Future



Acknowledgement of Country

Victoria's network of parks and reserves form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation. They are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns. The landscapes we see today are influenced by the skills, knowledge and activities of Aboriginal land managers. Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to Victoria's parks and reserves and their ongoing role in caring for Country.

The Land Management Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Section 38 of the Parks Victoria Act 2018 and is a land management strategy for the purposes of that Act. Any changes in the strategy other than those of a machinery, declaratory or minor technical nature will be made in accordance with the Parks Victoria Act 2018 and will require amendment of this strategy in consultation with any Victorian Government department or public authority whose interests may be affected by the strategy or amendment, any relevant specified Aboriginal party, and the general public.



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Front cover image: Crystal Brooks Falls, Mount Buffalo National Park

Inside front cover image: Grampians National Park

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Review of the Land Management Strategy

The Land Management Strategy was approved by the Board of Parks Victoria in February 2022 for submission to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

The Land Management Strategy was approved by the Minister for Environment and Climate Action in September 2022.

Parks Victoria will report on progress with implementing this strategy every three years. The strategy will be reviewed at least every 10 years, or when directed to do so by the responsible Minister.



Foreword

Victoria's parks are highly valued by the community. They provide open space, stunning landscapes, habitats to protect flora and fauna and areas to conserve cultural heritage. Our parks conserve examples of Victoria's natural ecosystems, catchments and open space. They provide a wide range of services and benefits to industries such as tourism and agriculture. Parks enhance liveability and sustainability by providing cost effective clean water, clean air, climate regulation, protection of coastal assets and habitats for species. Our parks also directly contribute to community wellbeing by providing opportunities for improving physical, mental, social and spiritual health.

The Land Management Strategy, the first prepared under the *Parks Victoria Act (2018)*, provides strategic long-term directions for how the parks estate will be managed. The Strategy will cover all of the Parks Victoria estate; four million hectares across 3,000 land and marine parks – or 18 per cent of Victoria's land and 70 per cent of its coastline.

Parks Victoria is committed to ensuring parks are healthy and resilient for current and future generations. The Land Management Strategy will be used to respond to key future challenges and opportunities - including climate change, population growth, changing community needs, increased visitation, and managing invasive pest species.



The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Environment and Climate Action

Victoria's increasing population and popularity as a tourist destination means that more people are visiting parks, from national parks that protect Victoria's environment and heritage to urban and open space areas that protect local environments and provide important areas for connecting to nature and recreation.

The connection to land, biodiversity and natural resources on Country is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people. The Land Management Strategy seeks to support a self-determination approach. Parks Victoria will work in partnership with Traditional Owners to restore and care for healthy cultural landscapes in all aspects of park management. Many parks are managed in a partnership between Traditional Owners and the Victorian Government and more will be managed this way in the future.

The Land Management Strategy outcomes include protecting and restoring natural and cultural values and landscapes, connecting through partnerships with community, supporting Traditional Owner self-determination, providing opportunities for quality visitor experiences, and supporting sustainable, accessible nature-based tourism.

It has been prepared with input from Traditional Owner partners and extensive consultation with wide range of interested community and stakeholder groups and individuals.



Hon. John Pandazopoulos
Chair, Parks Victoria Board



Introduction

The *Parks Victoria Act 2018* (the Act) Section 38(1) requires preparation of a Land Management Strategy to set out the general long-term directions, strategies and priorities for the protection, management and use of the terrestrial, coastal and marine parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria.

Parks Victoria is a statutory authority of the Victorian Government, acting in accordance with the *Parks Victoria Act 2018*. Parks Victoria is responsible for managing a diverse public land estate of 4.1 million hectares, including more than 3,000 terrestrial and marine parks and reserves that make up 18 per cent of Victoria's area and 70 per cent of its coastline.

Victoria's parks face many challenges. Our climate is changing, leading to more extreme weather events and more severe and extensive fires – as occurred in south-eastern Australia in late 2019 and early 2020. As the climate changes, the distribution of species, both native and introduced, is changing, challenging park management and conservation. Invasive species, direct human impacts and legacy land management practices are also significant challenges to nature conservation. Effective and timely responses to these threats are required to continue to conserve our biodiversity and reduce the growing number of threatened species recorded in Victoria. The Land Management Strategy implementation will support the Victorian government commitment to reach net zero emissions and a climate resilient Victoria by 2050, through the actions and adaptation enabled through the Biodiversity 2037 plan and the Natural Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan.

Victoria's increasing population and popularity as a tourist destination means that more people, both locally and from afar, are visiting parks. Also, as metropolitan Melbourne and regional centres grow, more people are seeking the open space and recreational opportunities that urban parks provide. There is great opportunity for more people to connect with nature, Aboriginal culture and Victoria's heritage.

Victoria's parks provide a rich and diverse range of settings, from urban to remote, and play an increasing role as critical community assets for providing positive public health and wellbeing. Healthy Parks Healthy People highlights the

fundamental connection between environmental health and human health and wellbeing. Healthy parks sustain our life and liveability. By experiencing, understanding and benefiting from connecting with parks, people advocate, care, invest in and act for the health of parks.

For many thousands of years, Traditional Owners have had a continued connection and affinity with the land. Self-determination is a core priority for many Victorian Traditional Owners, with management of Country a fundamental imperative and right – including becoming involved in park management. Already, many parks are being jointly managed in partnerships between Traditional Owners and the Victorian Government. More parks will be managed this way in the future, and other management models, such as collaborative and sole management by Traditional Owners, will also need to be considered as recognition of Traditional Owner rights to, and goals for Country continue to evolve.

The severe and large-scale bushfires experienced in Victoria in late 2019 and early 2020 had unprecedented impacts on the forested landscapes in the east of the state; much of it within parks. Large numbers of plants and animals were destroyed, and recovery will take many years. Some parts of the environment may not fully recover or will change permanently. The closure of parks and the destruction of park assets meant tourism, local economies and communities in the region suffered greatly, and much work and support are required to help them recover. The damage to Aboriginal heritage values has not been fully assessed but may be considerable.

Since 2020 the world continues to be challenged by the coronavirus pandemic. This crisis has led to people being isolated and less connected. It has also challenged businesses that provide nature, culture and recreation-dependent services. The pandemic has illustrated how people seek to be connected, to people and to places, and the importance of the future of the Victorian parks and waterways to provide for this. The full impacts of the pandemic on the community, the economy and Parks Victoria's management of the estate are still unfolding but are likely to be far-reaching. The Land Management Strategy will provide the framework for ongoing recovery efforts in response to these large-scale and long-term impacts.

The recent Government investment into parks across the state to deliver economic, environmental and community benefits is aligned with the themes, outcomes, and priorities set out in the Land Management Strategy. There are current major investments in conservation, cultural and nature-based tourism in parks. See Figure 1. These include:

Managing Country together: through embedding the Cultural Landscape Strategy in the LMS, and delivering joint management plans for the Gunaikurnai, Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta People.

Protecting Victoria’s natural riches: through creating the Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary to support habitat restoration, species recovery and rewilding programs with community and volunteer involvement.

Adapting to climate change: through broadscale pest management to reduce competition and protect habitat for recovering fauna, post fire.

Enriching the visitor experience: through the creation of three new urban parks, and improving camping and visitor facilities, including new campsites, across many parks in the estate.

Managing the landscape through partnerships: through commitment to planning, understanding and managing impacts on the landscape, and fostering resilience in our flora and fauna.

Recognising connections to place: through recognising and fostering the major contribution of volunteers to the park estate and encouraging new connections through the Great Outdoors programs.

Contributing to the visitor economy: through rebuilding and investing in new initiatives to support regional economies and tourism.

Managing infrastructure and operations: through investing in critical terrestrial and marine assets to support visitation and protect park values.

These highlight the scale and complexity of the risks and challenges facing park managers and reinforces the need for strategic planning for the future of park management in Victoria.

This Land Management Strategy describes how Parks Victoria will address these challenges and make the most of the opportunities to protect the valuable and much treasured natural and cultural heritage within Victoria’s parks as a legacy for future generations.



Figure 1: Programs and investment Parks Victoria and the Victorian Government are undertaking to enable the LMS's Outcomes



The Parks

Parks Victoria manages national parks, state parks, coastal parks, marine national parks, marine sanctuaries, and wilderness parks reserved under the *National Parks Act 1975*, as well as metropolitan, reservoir and regional parks, heritage parks and gardens, conservation reserves and recreation reserves managed under other legislation. Collectively, these areas are referred to as parks throughout this strategy. Parks Victoria is not responsible for state forests, or parks managed by other organisations such as local government but works in close collaboration with other responsible agencies.

Victoria's parks protect many of the state's most precious places; significant and spectacular natural landscapes that have unique and intrinsic value.

The parks are the stronghold of the state's flora and fauna, providing critical habitat for many threatened species. They protect extensive Aboriginal cultural values, including cultural heritage sites and many of the state's most significant historic places. The parks receive almost 100 million recreational visits per year and are a mainstay of regional tourism and community well-being.

The range of activities that people undertake in parks are as diverse as the parks themselves; from hiking in remote areas to picnicking in an urban park. Urban parks also have a very important role providing space within crowded urban areas. Some urban parks also provide opportunities for sports, such as cricket and golf.

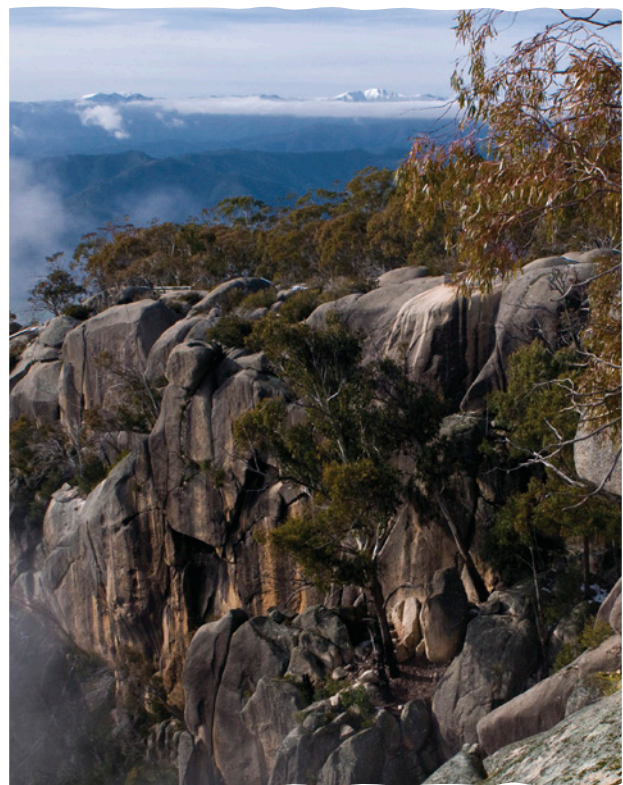
Key parks are an important component of Australia's National Reserve System¹, a network of formally recognised parks, reserves and protected areas primarily dedicated to the long-term protection of Australia's biodiversity. The National Reserve System is managed to protect and maintain biological diversity based on 6 international classes developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The 6-level system classifies protected areas according to their management objectives, which range from strict nature conservation to multi-use reserves.

The areas protected by Victoria's parks and reserves reflect in part the state's contribution to achieving a comprehensive, adequate and representative

National Reserve System. Actions to meet this national objective and to achieve relevant state policy objectives, such as the creation of new parks or changes to existing parks, are determined by governments.

The services provided by Victoria's parks make a substantial contribution to the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of Victoria. Parks contribute at least \$2 billion and 20,000 jobs to the Victorian economy each year through nature-based tourism.

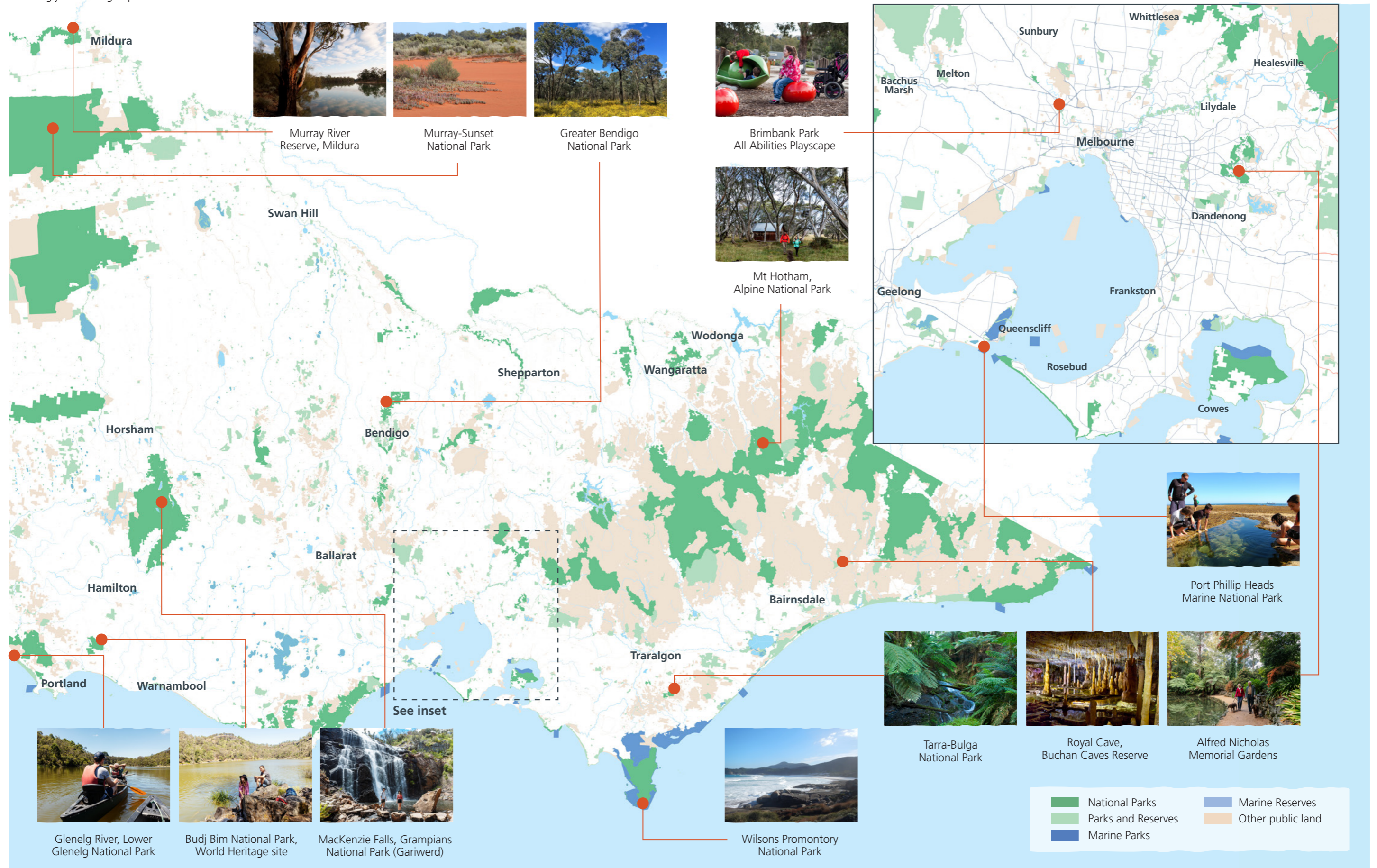
Parks also provide many other services to the community such as the provision of clean water, flood mitigation, coastal asset protection, pollination services for agriculture, and health benefits through recreational and cultural values. Parks also make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation by storing over 270 million tonnes of carbon; equivalent to 9 years' worth of Victoria's greenhouse emissions.



Above: Mount Buffalo National Park



Figure 2: Parks Victoria managed parks and reserves: including joint managed parks with Traditional Owners



Disclaimer: Parks Victoria does not guarantee that this data is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability which may arise from you relying on this information. Data source acknowledgements: State Digital Mapbase, The State of Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The Land Management Strategy

This is the inaugural Land Management Strategy for the terrestrial, coastal and marine parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria and, as required by the Act, the strategy will be reviewed at least every 10 years. Parks Victoria will report on progress with implementing this strategy every three years.

This strategy will underpin park planning and other park management activities, with the goal of achieving transparent and consistent park management at the state level. It will be an important guide for developing and reviewing park management plans and will help partners and stakeholders understand park management priorities and how they can help to achieve the long-term outcomes.

The strategy is supported by, and reflects, government legislation, policies and key priorities. In particular, the strategy is designed to meet the objects of the Act, which are to:

- a) protect, conserve and enhance Parks Victoria managed land, including its natural and cultural values, for the benefit of the environment and current and future generations.
- b) recognise and support Traditional Owner knowledge of, and interest in, Parks Victoria managed land.
- c) provide for and encourage the community's enjoyment of, and involvement in, Parks Victoria managed land.
- d) improve the community's knowledge and appreciation of Parks Victoria managed land.
- e) contribute to the wellbeing of the community through the effective protection and management of Parks Victoria managed land.
- f) contribute to the achievement of state and regional land management outcomes as far as is consistent with the effective protection and management of Parks Victoria managed land.

The strategy is part of the planning framework that guides the activities of Parks Victoria, as shown in Figure 3.

This strategy will complement the development and implementation of Forest Management Plans,

being prepared by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), which will guide planning, decisions and management of Victoria's state forests for their multiple uses in line with community and cultural values. This strategy also reflects the strategic framework from the *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy (2021)*, which details Traditional Owner strategies for activating their rights and obligations to Country.

Parks are reserved under different legislation for a range of purposes. The reserving legislation – the park's tenure – provides the key priority for management. The National Parks Act 1975 for example, provides for national and state parks, wilderness areas and a range of other areas and prescribes a general priority for protecting natural values, while the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 provides for land to be reserved for a range of nominated purposes from nature conservation to recreation. Other legislation, such as the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2016 and the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999, provide additional directions that management must comply with.

Where Aboriginal title has been granted over a park it will be managed in accordance with a Joint Management Plan developed by the responsible Traditional Owner Land Management Board. Parks Victoria will ensure this strategy supports its role as a partner in joint management.

There may be cases where other organisations have management roles in Victorian parks; for example, the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, which has been established to manage Crown land along the Great Ocean Road. Parks Victoria will use this strategy to inform its role as a partner with any such organisation.

This strategy sets out an Aspiration for the parks, identifying what they should be like in future, and 8 integrated Outcomes. This is followed by a set of Principles that will guide park management. The strategy then articulates specific Priorities for responding to the opportunities and challenges facing park management, organised into 8 themes. Each set of priorities has indicators to help track progress towards the outcomes they are supporting.

Our Planning Framework

Note: The Land Management Strategy applies to all Parks Victoria managed areas with the exception of local ports, which Parks Victoria manage in accordance with the Ports Agreement between the Minister for Ports and Parks Victoria

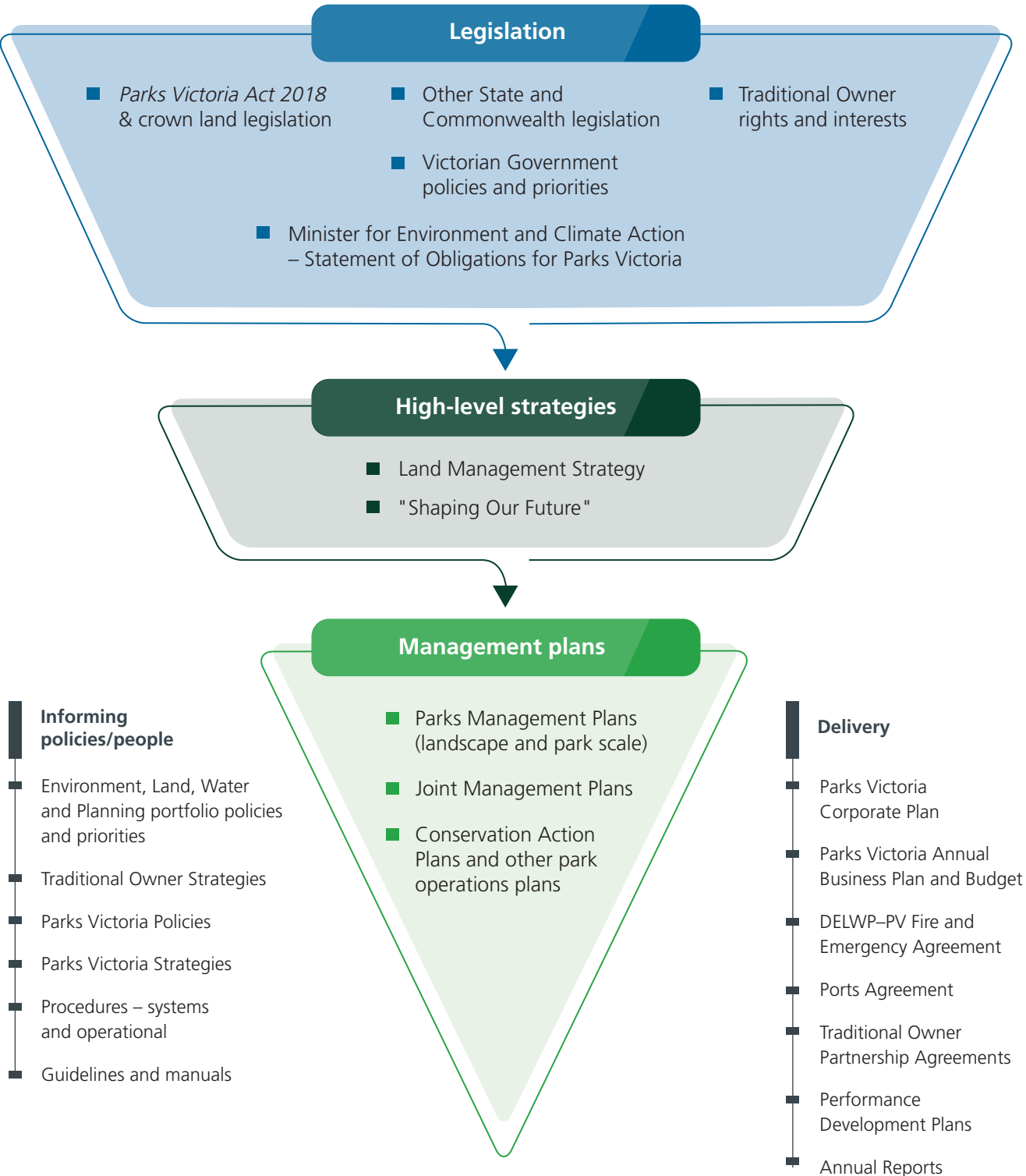


Figure 3: The Land Management Strategy relative to Parks Victoria’s Planning Framework.



Aspiration and Outcomes

Aspiration

Victoria's parks will be resilient, inclusive and valued; conserving nature and cultural heritage; supporting Traditional Owner aspirations; and contributing to healthy communities.

Outcomes

Using the guiding principles and implementing the priorities set out in this strategy will help achieve the following outcomes.

1. Traditional Owner self-determination is advanced through managing Country together.
2. High value natural systems, cultural values and landscapes are protected and restored.
3. The impacts of climate change are responded to by planned adaptation, mitigation and, where necessary, accepting irreversible changes to some natural and cultural values and landscapes.
4. Visitors enjoy high quality experiences and are empowered to make informed decisions about where they go and what they do in parks.

5. Partnerships increase park management capability and capacity and enable management across boundaries and at the landscape scale.
6. Communities and people of all backgrounds and abilities value and are advocates for parks.
7. Regional economies and parks benefit from healthy parks and nature-based tourism.
8. Sustainable assets and park management provide quality visitor experiences and protect natural and heritage values.

Success in achieving these outcomes will be measured using a set of indicators. Additionally, Parks Victoria is committed to contributing to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. These goals provide a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future. Effective management of Victoria's parks will help achieve this. Each theme includes the relevant Sustainable Development Goals that the priorities will help support, as shown in Appendix One.



Twelve Apostles
Marine National Park

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles set out below are designed to ensure that:

- park management decisions are consistent, transparent, practical, well-informed and well considered.
- protection of environmental and cultural values is paramount.
- risks are assessed and managed.

Protect natural and cultural values

The ecological and cultural integrity of parks will be strengthened by being protected and managed at a landscape scale. To improve ecosystem integrity through active restoration where required will improve biodiversity and ecosystem health and resilience to major disturbances. The natural and cultural values of parks are inextricably connected. A holistic nature and culture journey approach will recognise and respect the close relationship between people and the natural environment. Park management will recognise and protect the contribution of culture – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – acknowledging its association with natural values.

Prepare for the future

Park planning and management will prepare for, and respond to, emerging environmental and social issues, and anticipate how parks will need to change in the future in response to climate change, threats to biodiversity, population growth, and changing recreational patterns and uses.

There will be support for transfer of parks and reserves to Aboriginal title, joint management of parks and formal agreements that recognise Traditional Owners' rights and connection to Country, and management of cultural landscapes.

Maintain and strengthen the parks estate

All parks will be managed according to their specified purpose and function, to protect environmental, cultural and social values. All actions will enhance the parks, reflect best practice, and embrace universal design including access, equity, diversity, quality and sustainability. Connections between parks and adjacent land will be strengthened to provide linked or complementary recreation and visitor experiences, cultural landscapes and habitat corridors regardless of tenure. Any changes to the estate should be for the protection of important environmental, cultural or social values.

Use expert knowledge and evidence-based management

Park management will use the best available science, digital technology and expert knowledge to be adaptive and handle uncertainty. Decisions will account for risks and social values, with monitoring of the condition and trend in major park values. Traditional Owner knowledge of living biocultural values will be used to guide park management and be respectfully integrated into planning and science. Traditional Owner land management practices and customary uses will be recognised as integral components of knowledge systems and management actions.

Promote public safety

A safe environment will be provided in parks as far as practicable, while recognising that risk and adventure are part of experiencing the parks.

Managing risk – including preparing for and managing fire and other threats, responding to emergencies, and appropriately managing risks to park visitors – will be a key consideration in park management decision making. All reasonable efforts will be made to keep visitors safe and provide information, including for major public safety responses when necessary, so that people can make informed decisions about how they use parks.



Cope Hut, Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing
Alpine National Park

Connect with community

Diverse opportunities will be provided for the community to enjoy and benefit from parks, through recreation activities, events, tourism activities, education and interpretation programs and volunteering. The visitor experience will be guided by the purpose of the park reservation and ensure the protection of natural and cultural values. The community will be encouraged to engage with, and develop, social and cultural connections to Aboriginal cultural heritage and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage, and understand, be active in, and appreciate parks. The importance of parks to local and regional communities will be acknowledged.

Build partnerships

Partnerships with other public land managers, park user groups, neighbours, community, volunteers and many other government, non-government and corporate organisations will be fostered consistent with conservation priorities and legislation. The expertise and contribution of volunteers to park management will be recognised and supported. Partnerships with Traditional Owners will empower them, help improve the health of cultural landscapes, recognise and enable Traditional Owner rights, provide opportunities to incorporate traditional knowledge and practices, and strengthen connection to Country. Opportunities within parks will be identified for appropriate business activities that enhance the parks' values and the visitor experience and are environmentally sustainable.

Priorities

The future will bring challenges and opportunities. Managing parks requires preparing for, and responding to, environmental and social changes. Addressing these changes requires understanding their causes, developing effective responses, and then determining the most appropriate way of implementing the responses.

The priorities for responding to the opportunities and challenges influencing Parks Victoria's management of parks are grouped under the following themes:

1. Managing Country together.
2. Protecting Victoria's natural riches.
3. Adapting to climate change.
4. Enriching the visitor experience.
5. Managing the landscape through partnerships.
6. Recognising connections to place.
7. Contributing to the visitor economy.
8. Managing infrastructure and operations.

Listed under each theme is the outcome that implementation of these priorities will help achieve, along with indicators that will be used to track progress. Case studies are presented outlining the relevant land management practices.

Theme 1: Managing Country Together



The connection to land, biodiversity and natural resources on Country is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people. Supporting this connection brings significant benefits to both parks and the broader Victorian community. Parks Victoria will work effectively in partnership with Traditional Owners to restore and care for healthy cultural landscapes in all aspects of park management.

Victoria's parks contain a high concentration of the cultural heritage values and living biocultural values remaining in the state. Parks Victoria has a legal responsibility to protect all Aboriginal cultural heritage within parks, and through partnerships with Traditional Owners, has a unique opportunity to make a significant contribution to the conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage and incorporation of cultural values in park policy, management and planning in Victoria.

Parks Victoria is building capacity internally and with Traditional Owner partners to enable the effective joint management of protected areas and living biocultural values and the tangible and intangible cultural heritage they contain. In addition, as more Traditional Owner groups gain experience with joint management, and their aspirations for managing Country are implemented, Parks Victoria will be ready for new management models, such as sole management, that support Aboriginal self-determination.

The Victorian Government actively supports Traditional Owner self-determination and is pursuing agreements with Traditional Owners that recognise their rights and interests. The Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework² provides the strategic policy framework for Government to undertake systemic, structural and institutional change to enable self-determination. This recognises that it is the role of Government to change and remove systemic and institutional barriers. It is also the Government's role to empower Aboriginal Victorians to drive and own programs that meet their community's needs while increasing the safety, relevance and accessibility of Government systems. Parks Victoria is implementing these commitments, working with Traditional Owners to protect and manage parks and reserves that form part of Victoria's cultural landscapes.

Traditional Owner approaches to land and water management are holistic, combining culture, society and economy. The expansion of joint management in Victoria is providing more opportunity for Traditional Owners to manage public land. By incorporating decision-making rights for Traditional Owners, joint management is already having significant implications for parks, including greater capacity to protect cultural sites and the incorporation of Traditional Owner knowledge, perspectives and values into park planning. The objectives and priorities in Traditional Owner held strategies e.g. Country Plans and Joint Management Plans are important to implementing the Land Management Strategy.

Priorities

The future will bring challenges and opportunities. Managing parks requires preparing for, and responding to, environmental and social changes. Addressing these changes requires understanding their causes, developing effective responses, and then determining the most appropriate way of implementing the responses.

Parks Victoria will:

- 1.1 Work in partnership with Traditional Owners to implement the outcomes expressed in the Cultural Landscapes Strategy and the Traditional Owner held Country Plans and other strategies (see Figure 5.).
- 1.2 Support Traditional Owners to implement self-determination as owners and rights holders over public land, including protection and recognition of cultural and natural values, the joint management of parks and the pathway to becoming land managers.
- 1.3 Improve tools, procedures and knowledge to effectively protect and restore Aboriginal cultural heritage on parks, in partnership with Traditional Owners.
- 1.4 Support cultural landscapes as an important basis for planning and management.
- 1.5 In a culturally appropriate manner promote Aboriginal culture, values, languages and stories more visibly across parks, in partnership with Traditional Owners, to enrich the experience and education of visitors.
- 1.6 Work to ensure that the Traditional Owner cultural values and impacts of visitation are appropriately managed for commercial, visitor economy and tourism opportunities.
- 1.7 Share experiences, skills and resources between Parks Victoria and Traditional Owner partners to increase shared capacity to protect cultural landscapes.
- 1.8 Support Traditional Owners Reading Country (bio-cultural monitoring) to inform the management of Country (land, water and biodiversity).

The Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy (2021) details Traditional Owner goals for Country. The strategic framework below sets out the five program areas that are detailed in the Cultural Landscapes Strategy.

Case study

Victoria's first joint management plan

In 2018, the Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan was launched. This plan, which guides the management of 10 parks in Gippsland previously solely managed by Parks Victoria, was the first joint management plan in Victoria.

Joint management aims to bring together the combined skills, expertise and cultural knowledge of the Gunaikurnai people and the Victorian Government for the management of these parks and reserves in a way that respects and values, culture and traditions of the Traditional Owners.

This approach is leading to:

- Gunaikurnai people having a real influence on how the land is managed.
- employment creation, education and training opportunities.
- park users and visitors continuing to be able to enjoy both traditional and new activities that connect them with nature and Gunaikurnai culture.

Parks Victoria is working closely in partnership with the Gunaikurnai people to implement outcomes and actions from the joint management plans for the jointly managed parks. A further goal of joint management is to progress self-determination, social justice and reconciliation for the Gunaikurnai people.

Victorian Traditional Owners have developed a Cultural Landscapes Strategy to set out a framework and pathways to lead the planning and management of Country in line with their cultural obligations to care for Country. The Strategy along with Traditional Owner Country Plans supports the development of institutional frameworks and operational and procedural pathways that are tailored to each Group's self-determined pathway. Traditional Owners are enabled to undertake on-Country management actions across all land tenures and according to their respective cultural obligations and economic interests.




The Cultural Landscapes Strategy provides direction for Parks Victoria to better enable and empower Traditional Owner self-determination in park and land management and for the rights and roles of

Traditional Owners as landowners and managers. It provides direction for a collaborative park management future through a cultural landscapes approach to management.

Traditional Owners have strong aspirations to ensure cultural practices are re-introduced, adapted and applied wherever possible to allow for healing and caring for Country.

The strategic framework from the Cultural Landscapes Strategy is on the following page.

Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Sustainable Development Goals
<p>1. Traditional Owner self-determination is advanced through managing Country together.</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Owner decision making in park management. • Traditional Owner participation in park management. • Traditional Owner knowledge and culture incorporated in park planning and management. 	  



THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPES STRATEGY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

1. RESTORING THE KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

COMPONENT OBJECTIVES

To restore and protect the Traditional Owner knowledge system

COMPONENT AREAS

- Reading Country Programs
- Traditional Owner led research partnerships
- Traditional Owner knowledge and practice networks

COMPONENT OUTCOMES

Traditional Owner led practices are rejuvenated and knowledge protected and applied to meet cultural objectives that include social, ecological and economic co-benefits

2. STRENGTHENING TRADITIONAL OWNER NATION RESILIENCE

COMPONENT OBJECTIVES

To strengthen Traditional Owner Nation resilience to enable delivery of our contemporary role as custodians of Country

COMPONENT AREAS

- Strengthening the government funding model for Traditional Owner Corporations and Nations
- NRM based Economic Development
- Diverse Self Determination Pathways for Diverse Nations

COMPONENT OUTCOMES

Traditional Owner Nations are enabled to lead the process to heal and strengthen Country through their governance systems and with active, adaptive management

3. TRADITIONAL OWNER CULTURAL LANDSCAPES PLANNING

COMPONENT OBJECTIVES

To enable Traditional Owner cultural landscapes planning

COMPONENT AREAS

- Cultural governance guides decision making
- Development of planning frameworks that are tailored and appropriate to each group's pathway
- System development for assessing health of Country

COMPONENT OUTCOMES

Cultural landscapes are the basis for land management planning

4. EMBEDDING TRADITIONAL OWNER KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

COMPONENT OBJECTIVES

To embed Traditional Owner knowledge and practice into policy, planning and the management of Country

COMPONENT AREAS

- Institutional arrangements of the Government are enhanced to reflect Traditional Owner rights regarding management of Country
- Two-way capacity is developed
- Co-Governance arrangements are in place

COMPONENT OUTCOMES

Victorian Government policy, legislation and procedures enable and embed Traditional Owner knowledge and practice across all cultural landscapes

5. TRADITIONAL OWNER CULTURAL LANDSCAPES MANAGEMENT

COMPONENT OBJECTIVES

To enable the application of Traditional Owner cultural objectives, knowledge and practice in the management of public land

COMPONENT AREAS

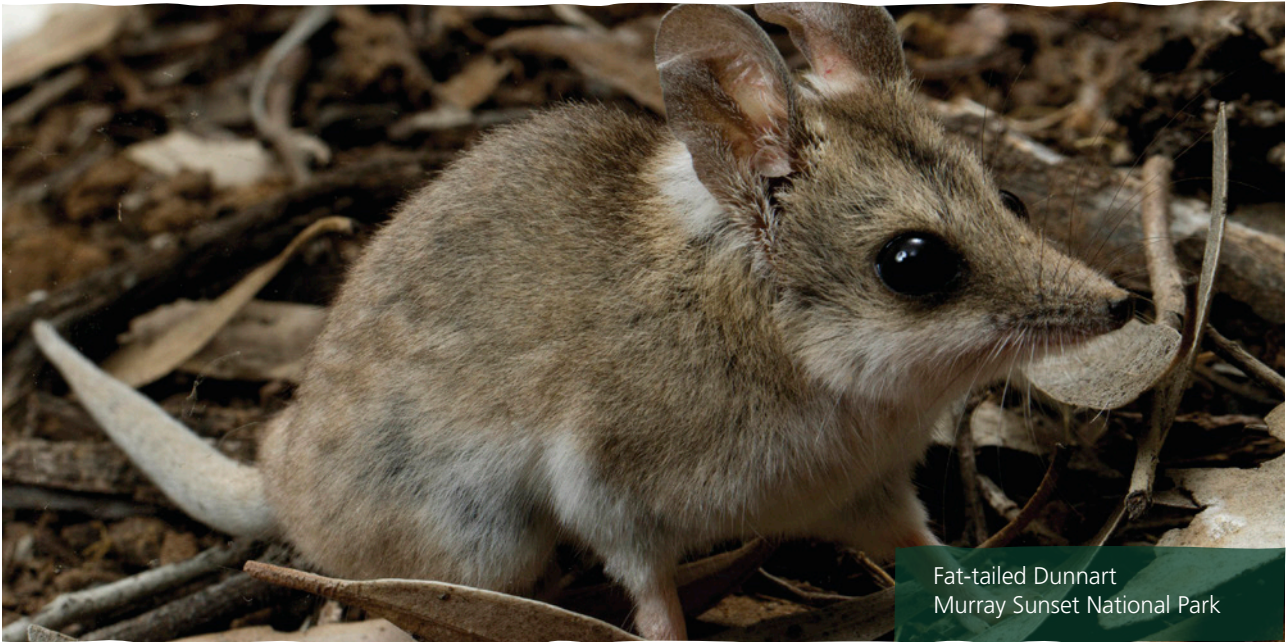
- Country Management programs are established
- Cultural landscapes are managed by Traditional Owners through shared governance arrangements and Sole Management is established
- Collaborative management pilots in priority cultural landscapes

COMPONENT OUTCOMES

Traditional Owners have decision making authority over the management of Traditional territories

Figure 5: Cultural Landscapes Strategy framework

Theme 2: Protecting Victoria's Natural Riches



Victoria's parks are incredibly rich in biodiversity and cultural values, containing the best of the State's natural riches. Parks provide ecosystem services, including clean water supplies, carbon storage, protection from storms and flooding, and cooling of urban environments. Parks contribute to community and individual health and wellbeing, cultural and spiritual connection, recreation and tourism.

Parks face many threats in these unprecedented times. Climate change is with us, here and now, and its impacts are intensifying, evident in the 2019-20 bushfire season with major loss of tall forests and rainforest and the death of countless animals. The meteorological records show that over the last fifty years the Victorian climate has become hotter and drier with many more extreme fire danger days, and those trends are likely to continue.

The changing climate will not only bring its own threats – it will make many existing threats worse, such as invasive species and altered stream flows in terrestrial parks and marine pests, population pressures and nutrient and sediment runoff in marine and coastal environments. Using climate change forecasts and modelling, information drawn from the State of the Parks process and other monitoring data and research, we can categorise the key threats to nature in parks as: catastrophic bushfires and

other large-scale events; invasive species; altered fire regimes; altered hydrology and water quality; human disturbance and natural resource use; legacies of past land uses; gradual major ecological transitions; inadequate conservation capability and resourcing.

Protecting nature is a fundamental goal of park management, and Parks Victoria seeks to address the above threats through a range of programs and actions. This includes conserving diverse ecosystems and the 90 per cent of Victoria's threatened species that are found within parks.

Parks Victoria acknowledges that enabling Traditional Owners to be decision makers and actively manage cultural values through applying Traditional Owner knowledge and practice-led approach will greatly contribute to biodiversity objectives and help protect threatened species.

Park management strives to meet best-practice conservation standards, based on the internationally recognised Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation³. This approach uses a collaborative process to identify priorities and develop strategies drawing on conservation experience, scientific understanding, local environmental and operational knowledge, partnerships, and traditional ecological knowledge and strategic thinking.

A landscape approach is important for managing the protected area network. This recognises landscape-scale processes that often extend beyond traditional management boundaries and involves cross-tenure management to address threats to parks such as fire, weeds and pest animals and opportunities for restoration within and around parks for connectivity.

It also acknowledges the importance of cultural landscapes for Traditional Owners and for broader natural system health and community resilience.

*State of the Parks*⁴ reporting shows that sustained investment is needed for environmental protection in parks. Urgent action is needed to expand conservation management and increase responsiveness. Building resilience of natural systems is an important response to mitigate climate change.

Building community support for and involvement in protecting the parks' environmental, social and cultural values is essential for their continued conservation. The challenge is to provide sustainable, accessible and meaningful visitor experiences while protecting the environment, conservation and heritage values of protected areas.

Parks Victoria will seek to establish landscape-scale sanctuaries that benefit threatened species, tackle threats and restore ecosystems. This will involve large-scale programs that incorporate increased citizen science, volunteer and Traditional Owner participation. If successful, such flagship projects will demonstrate the importance and value of working at this landscape scale. Traditional Owners have expressed interest in cultural tourism and flagship projects, and there is an opportunity to partner with Traditional Owners to co-design and deliver these outcomes.

Parks Victoria applies a risk-based, adaptive management approach that enables managers to see a clear connection between desired conservation outcomes and the actions which are delivered on the ground. A best-practice conservation action planning methodology is used to identify and focus on strategies that will achieve the greatest improvement in the overall health of ecosystems within parks. Conservation Action Plans at the landscape scale identify the priority threats to conservation assets and the management strategies that will improve their condition.



Case study

One step ahead of the game

The Otway Ark Project began in 2015 as an extension of a fox baiting program in the Great Otway National Park. Its aim was to build resilience by maintaining or enhancing species richness and distribution, and the abundance of ground dwelling native mammals, including the Long-nosed Potoroo and Southern Brown Bandicoot (both at risk of extinction from predation, climate change impacts and urbanisation).

Ongoing research is measuring the effectiveness of the baiting program and monitoring the response of specific mammal species that are impacted by fox and feral cat numbers. While it will take time to see significant outcomes, the project is showing the importance of adaptive management such as through improvements to monitoring and changes to baiting types and frequency.




Other opportunities were also identified to support increasing the resilience of mammals in the Otways. This has included targeting the management of introduced invasive and pest species, such as goat and deer, and community engagement on responsible cat ownership.

The project is being achieved through cross tenure management across public land and private property, which has included knowledge sharing, improved planning and growing community involvement. It is also supported by key research partners including the Arthur Rylah Institute, DELWP, University of Melbourne, and a growing citizen science program.

Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

- 2.1 Invest in addressing threatening processes through conservation programs, including the eradication or reduction of invasive and pest species, to build the resilience of natural systems in parks.
 - 2.2 Improve ecosystem protection and restoration, including active intervention such as the reintroduction of threatened species and species with cultural values and uses that are in decline to support resilience of natural systems and cultural connections.
 - 2.3 Collaborate with Traditional Owners for the sharing and application of traditional ecological knowledge gained from research (Reading Country).
 - 2.4 Incorporate research and citizen and environmental volunteer science into evidence-based Conservation Action Plans
 - 2.5 Address critical information gaps to increase understanding of the environmental, social and Traditional Owner cultural values and benefits of parks, including management effectiveness and outcomes.
 - 2.6 Develop proposals for, and seek to establish, landscape-scale sanctuaries focused on threatened species, large-scale threat and restoration programs involving citizen and volunteer science and collaboration with Traditional Owners.
 - 2.7 Adopt a landscape (including cultural landscapes) approach for cross-tenure management of parks and forests for land health outcomes, including habitat restoration, pest plant and animal programs in park and off park, to respond to the challenges that transcend existing management boundaries.
 - 2.8 Plan for and respond to large scale events – such as fire and flood – to mitigate the ecological impacts of those events.
 - 2.9 Respect natural processes in planning for, and managing risks to, coastal and marine park habitats and assets from coastal hazards and events linked to climate change.
- Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Sustainable Development Goals
2. High-value natural systems and cultural values are protected or restored.	Indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition of ecosystems and habitats. • Protection or restoration of threatened or culturally significant species. • Protection of Traditional Owner cultural heritage values. • Integration of science and traditional ecological knowledge in collaboration with Traditional Owners. 	  



Theme 3: Adapting to Climate Change



Ranger checking traps
Wilson's Promontory National Park

Climate change represents the greatest threat to Victoria's natural environment, posing significant challenges for conservation of nature and heritage. Impacts of climate change are already being experienced. Parks Victoria is acting to respond, supported by long-term climate change science and greater collaboration with partners.

Victoria has been warming over the past century, with the average annual temperature rising by just over 1 °C between 1910 and 2018.⁵ There have been more warm years than cool years in recent decades.

Victoria is forecast to continue to experience increasing temperatures, with more extremely hot days and fewer extremely cool days. Higher temperatures and less cool season rainfall with longer droughts will create more high fire danger days and a longer fire season. The scale and severity of the fires experienced in Victoria and other parts of south eastern Australia in late 2019 and early 2020 reflect this. As the climate warms, extreme rainfall events are becoming more intense, causing flooding. Parks will be closed more often because of safety considerations and damage caused by fires and floods.

Ecosystems are changing and will likely continue to change as human-induced atmospheric carbon

dioxide concentrations rise. This rise correlates with increasing temperatures, disrupted weather and seasons, melting land- and sea-ice, rising sea level, ocean acidification, and more weather extremes.

Extreme events are also leading to the loss of tangible cultural heritage through flood events, aeolian (sand and dust storm) events, rising sea levels and resultant exposure of sites.

As coastlines are increasingly impacted by rising sea level and more frequent and severe storms, decisions will need to be made about where action can mitigate impacts, and where retreat should be accepted and managed. This is a significant management issue for Parks Victoria given around 70 per cent of Victoria's approximately 2,500 kilometres of coastline is within parks.

An important focus of this strategy is to manage the health of the land, marine and coastal environment so that ecosystems, communities and built assets are as resilient as they can be in the face of future change. Resilience is the ability of a system to adapt to, or tolerate, change without losing its original function. It is also the ability of a system to overcome or bounce back from a disruption.

Extreme events such as bushfires can have major impacts on communities close to parks, such as the economic losses from reduced visitation when parks are closed during emergencies and recovery actions. Such events also add to the challenges of maintaining sustainable, safe park visitor services and responding to changes in recreation and tourism patterns.

Parks play a valuable role in mitigating the impacts of climate change. Urban parks provide cooling benefits in built areas, while forests and other plants remove and store carbon from the atmosphere.

Protecting ecosystem values and investing in the restoration or enhancement in parks and surrounding landscapes is therefore vital. There is also a significant mitigation opportunity in reducing the carbon footprint of the park operations and development through energy efficiency and sustainable design of capital works. Facilities and services managed by Parks Victoria or licensed operators is considered under Theme 8.

Addressing climate change will involve managing and/ or accepting impacts such as retreating alpine areas, loss of coastal and wetland areas, and changes in the geographic distribution of species. Meeting these challenges requires sound management approaches, including emergency and contingency planning, and undertaking recovery work as soon as possible following damaging events. Managing parks under a changing climate also requires increased and effective collaboration with partners and the community, particularly Traditional Owners, whose knowledge and practices are strongly adaptive to climate change and the effects on the condition of Country.



Case study

Managing threatened natural features in Gippsland Lakes Reserve

The Mitchell River silt jetties are a unique geomorphological feature within Victoria's Gippsland Lakes and are recognised as a site of national and international significance. Due to their narrow and low-lying nature, the jetties are highly vulnerable to wave and wind erosion.

This erosion could damage not just the silt jetties themselves but, if they were breached, the salinity of the lake could change. This in turn could impact important bird and fish habitat.

The jetties also have substantial cultural heritage and social values associated with them.

To manage the risk to these multiple values, joint managers Parks Victoria and the Gunaikurnai people partnered with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to undertake works to protect the jetties from erosion, including by laying rocks along the shoreline of the southern silt jetty. Works such as these highlight the importance of the values at risk and reasons for intervention in a natural process. As climate change increasingly impacts Victoria's coastline and other natural systems, tackling challenges like this, including deciding if, how and when to prevent or mitigate impacts, is likely to be required more frequently.







Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

- 3.1 Implement conservation management to improve the resilience of ecological systems and species in a changing climate and collaborate with Traditional Owners for the sharing of applied knowledge and practice gained from research (Reading Country).
- 3.2 Anticipate changes to terrestrial and marine landscapes and, where mitigation is not feasible, investigate and implement practicable solutions.
- 3.3 Further develop contingency planning for responses to extreme events, including worst-case scenarios, guided by scientific evidence and collaborate with Traditional Owners for the sharing and application of knowledge.
- 3.4 Undertake 'climate ready' trials to build knowledge of climate impacts on habitat types and most-affected species, for interventions to improve genetic diversity and to test the effectiveness of adaptation responses.
- 3.5 Build community capacity and resilience by working with Traditional Owners and partners to communicate and advocate to address climate change impacts on parks and park experiences.
- 3.6 Pursue opportunities for carbon regulation and carbon sequestration in natural systems within parks and support activities on private land aligned with priorities on public land.
- 3.7 Improve park planning and operations to reduce the carbon footprint of park facilities and services through energy efficient and environmentally sustainable design.
- 3.8 Incorporate climate change resilience in design and location of infrastructure to mitigate for climate change impacts such as urban heat and consider relocation of assets when risk of loss or damage to infrastructure significantly increases.

Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Sustainable Development Goals
<p>3. Responses to the impacts of climate change include planned adaptation, mitigation and, where necessary, accepting irreversible changes to some natural and cultural values and landscapes.</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of park ecosystems that best provide climate change refuges, carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services. • Protection of biodiversity values and park amenity at risk from climate change impacts through park design, planned adaptation and targeted interventions. • Community understanding of climate change impacts on park values, current and predicted rates of change and what is being done in response 	   

Theme 4: Enriching the Visitor Experience



Lysterfield Park

Parks provide many benefits for the people who visit them. Spending time in nature promotes positive physical and mental health, and improves concentration, learning, problem solving and creativity.⁶ Enriching the visitor experience to enhance these benefits is therefore an important part of park planning.

Visitor experience planning will prioritise the protection of cultural and natural values when anticipating and responding to park visitor and user needs and aspirations, broader community desires, external trends and available resources. The principle of 'universal design', which requires consideration of access, equity, diversity, quality and sustainability, is also a key consideration in park planning. There are barriers that make it difficult for some people to engage with parks, such as limited physical mobility; the way facilities are designed; lack of transport options; and lack of multiculturally appropriate park information about, and within, parks. Addressing these barriers is important if more people are to enjoy the benefits of parks.

Parks are planned and managed to provide a diversity of settings to support activities and experiences in appropriate areas. Parks have a range of primary purposes from highly protected natural areas to

urban parks used for active recreation and sport and parks used for passive recreation and community enjoyment.

Providing access for people with different levels of abilities, in appropriate locations, enables them to connect with parks in diverse and enriching ways. Enhanced access will increase people's willingness to be advocates for, and stewards of, these special places.

The benefits of volunteering in parks are many. For park managers, volunteers bring capabilities to assist in park conservation and they act as strong community advocates. Volunteers gain new skills, physical exercise in wonderful landscapes, social connection and the satisfaction of being able to actively contribute to protecting the great parks network.

Park management, based on an 'open, safe and clean' approach, prioritises the safety of staff and visitors, and the availability of essential visitor services. While safety is paramount, parks offer opportunities for activities that carry risks. This can be the reason some visitors seek experiences in more remote and challenging areas.

Population and tourism growth, changes in technology and encouragement of diverse groups and activities are collectively leading to more visits to parks. Parks Victoria applies a visitor experience framework to all parks to determine what experiences can be supported in a park and where best to invest in infrastructure to help meet changing and growing demands.

Some parks are currently experiencing visitation at, or above, capacity at peak times. This can adversely affect people's experiences and enjoyment and can often be detrimental to the biodiversity and other values of these parks. Visitor uses through tourism and recreation can have impacts on tangible and intangible heritage. There is a need to manage growing and changing visitor demand while protecting park values and supporting opportunities for visitor dispersal across our parks. Working in collaboration with tourism destination planning partners can also help resolve capacity challenges by identifying new and complementary visitor experiences in and around the parks estate.

Changes in technology, from electronic devices to higher quality outdoor equipment, allows more people to access parks and to do so in new ways. For example, social media is increasingly influencing where people go in parks, while fat tyre bikes now allow cyclists to ride in snow and deep sand. Park management needs to be responsive to these new and changing uses and where possible, anticipate the possible effects of emerging technologies and recreational preferences. New technologies, such as digital mapping and real-time data from visitor monitoring and the use of drones, enable improved park management.

An effective visitor compliance program, supported by park regulations, is also essential in encouraging appropriate visitor behavior and protecting parks. Habitat damage from illegal activities has increased, with illegal tree felling for firewood the most destructive activity. Offences can arise from visitors being unaware of park rules and therefore public awareness campaigns and provision of information are important. Compliance and enforcement can only be effective through working across tenures with other partners and stakeholders such as DELWP, Traditional Owners, the Game Management Authority and peak user groups.

Priorities



Above: Mornington Peninsula National Park

Parks Victoria will:




- 4.1 Prioritise the protection of natural and cultural heritage values when planning visitor experiences, recognising the variety of purposes of parks and park tenure, from priority on protection of the natural environment to social and health outcomes associated with open spaces for recreation and sport.
- 4.2 Manage recreation and visitation pressure relative to park carrying capacity and communicate management approaches effectively to park users.
- 4.3 Ensure park design and planning provides for inclusive, diverse, recreation opportunities and access for people, including from culturally and linguistically diverse and low socio-economic communities, people with a disability, the elderly, women's safety, gender diversity and teenagers.
- 4.4 Support events in parks that are sustainable and that maximise benefits and minimise adverse impacts on park values.
- 4.5 Use technological innovations to gather visitation data to inform understanding of

park visitor carrying capacity, and changes and trends in recreational activities to enable sustainable park management.

- 4.6 Promote and foster the understanding of health and wellbeing benefits of being in, and engaging with, parks.
- 4.7 Improve existing parks, and plan for new parks in metropolitan and regional growth areas to meet growing demand, multiple use and community safety.
- 4.8 Plan for and support a diversity of contemporary activities appropriate to the setting and location to improve the health and fitness of individuals and the community, including utilisation for sport and recreation.
- 4.9 Research and monitor changes in recreational demand, technology, recreational equipment and uses, and adapt park management to respond to, or anticipate, changes where possible and consistent with park values.

- 4.10 Enforce park regulations in collaboration with partners, supported by supported by communication and awareness campaigns, to reduce adverse impacts on parks and visitors.
- 4.11 Collaborate with Traditional Owners in planning for visitor facilities and access including restricting access for cultural reasons.
- 4.12 Provide information about park values using diverse communication methods to support enjoyable, safe and appropriate experiences in parks.

Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Sustainable Development Goals
<p>4. Visitors enjoy high quality experiences and are empowered to make informed decisions about where they go and what they do in parks.</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park settings and experiences aligned with visitor demand and expectations. • Parks and visitor sites are open, safe, and clean. • Parks provide diverse settings and manage capacity and impacts of visitation and recreation. • Pre-visit information and in-park information to enable informed decision-making and compliance. 	  



Theme 5: Managing the Landscape through Partnerships



Volunteering at Werribee Mansion
Werribee Park

Land management responsibilities and objectives are often shared by different groups, so partnerships are essential for effective parks management. Parks Victoria works with Traditional Owners, DELWP, other land management and conservation agencies, research institutions and community groups to be more efficient and to achieve greater benefits at a landscape scale. Park management partnerships include:

- Traditional Owners as rights holders over public land (see Theme 1: Managing Country together).
- government conservation and land management agencies and other land managers; for example, DELWP, Zoos Victoria, catchment management authorities, Melbourne Water, local government.
- volunteers and community conservation groups, such as Friends groups.
- specialist groups such as Four Wheel Drive Victoria, Sporting Shooters' Association, and Bushwalking Victoria.
- service providers, including tour operators and community organisations.
- not for profit and philanthropic groups associated with land management, conservation, research, education and health sectors, such

as the People and Parks Foundation, and the Victorian National Parks Association.

- national and international park agencies for collaboration and best practice learning

Parks do not exist in isolation but are part of a connected ecosystem of public and private land and waters. Parks often border privately-owned land, and pest animals and invasive species readily move between land tenure boundaries. Parks Victoria will partner with neighbours and other agencies to deliver broader programs, such as invasive species control, to maximise the benefits of those programs across land tenures and at the landscape scale where possible. Conservation work on private land also complements the conservation role of parks.

In Victoria, more than 100,000 hectares of native habitat on private land has been protected with the help of organisations like Trust for Nature. Similarly, local government manages many urban and peri-urban parks and coordinating park planning can provide better outcomes for the community.

Parks Victoria works with DELWP as part of Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) and other agencies to prepare for, respond to, and recover from, fire,

floods and other emergencies involving public land. The management of fire on public land, including planned burning for bushfire risk reduction, is the responsibility of DELWP. Parks Victoria plays an active role in the planning and delivery of fire management services, particularly on parks and reserves. Parks Victoria's emergency management roles and responsibilities, such as preparing and maintaining emergency management planning for parks, reserves, rivers and waterways, are set out in the Emergency Management Manual Victoria.

DELWP and catchment management authorities are funding partners for important conservation projects in many parks. These partnerships often focus on biodiversity, habitat connectivity, pest and weed management, regional waterway strategies and NRM plans for climate change as well as landscape and catchment-based matters.

Volunteering in parks is an important activity as it not only allows people to connect with parks, but also provides an invaluable boost to park management capacity. Partnerships with Friends groups and community organisations strengthen community knowledge and stewardship of parks, with benefits for nature, wildlife, and people. Volunteers undertake many thousands of hours of conservation work in Victoria's parks every year, including through Friends groups associated with a particular park or region, as individuals or through education groups or third party and community organisations.

Partnerships with health and recreation organisations and not-for-profit groups, as well as those that encourage involvement with parks by diverse and under-represented groups, are important for obtaining better outcomes for parks and people. For example, a partnership with Bendigo Community Health is making parks more accessible to residents, particularly the growing Karen community, by improving how information about parks is provided.

Partnerships are most effective when everyone understands and shares objectives and trusted relationships are built. Successful partnerships involve collaborative governance, mutual respect, pooling knowledge, learning together and building required skills and capabilities. Protecting and improving park values are core to any park management partnership.



Case study

Improving seagrass habitat in eastern Victoria

In 2014, large numbers of a native purple sea urchin (*Heliocidaris erythrogramma*) were observed overgrazing seagrass in a crucial wetlands biodiversity site in Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park in eastern Victoria. The barren areas created by the urchins were estimated to be expanding by 0.5-1m per month, with the largest 2.6 ha, which prompted an investigation.

In a bid to manage the overabundance, Parks Victoria and the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) invited local commercial fishers to participate in a program to reduce the number of sea urchins. VFA issued 6 applicants with permits allowing them to collect and sell the urchin between May and September. This approach greatly improved the seagrass habitat, as well as providing a valuable commercial opportunity for the fishers.



Above: Sea urchins, Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park



Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

- 5.1 Support partnerships with Traditional Owners, public land managers and neighbouring private landowners to enable more effective and efficient programs across tenures.
- 5.2 Establish and support more effective partnerships with land management and conservation agencies, researchers, educational institutions, Friends groups and interest groups to maximise the use of expertise, knowledge and capacity.
- 5.3 Recognise and celebrate the role of volunteers in protecting natural and cultural values in parks and contributing to communities, provide effective support for volunteers, and increase the number of people involved in volunteering.
- 5.4 Develop partnerships to seek co-investment in parks that benefit local communities with local councils and catchment management authorities for environmental works and programs
- 5.5 Establish partnerships with outdoor recreation peak bodies and physical activity organisations to support activities and licenced operators
- 5.6 Build partnerships with other park and protected area agencies across Australia and globally to deliver mutual benefits for knowledge exchange and capacity building

Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.



Case study

Protecting water supply catchments

A substantial proportion of Melbourne’s drinking water comes from forested catchments in the Yarra Ranges National Park and parts of Kinglake and Baw National Parks. Melbourne is fortunate in having access to safe, affordable drinking water sourced from these protected, forested catchments.

Parks Victoria works in partnership with Melbourne Water and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to manage bushfire risks, pest animals and visitor access in order to maintain high water quality. As Melbourne grows and adapts to climate change and variability, these close working partnerships will remain critical to maintaining the water supply values of these national parks.



Above: Yarra Ranges National Park

Outcome

5. Partnerships increase park management capability and capacity, and enable management across boundaries at the landscape scale.

Outcome Indicators

- Indicators:
- The effectiveness of existing and new partnerships.
 - The number and quality of cross-tenure agency and organisation partnerships.
 - The number and quality of volunteer partnerships.

Sustainable Development Goals



Theme 6: Recognising Connections to Place



The relationships between people and nature have shaped our physical environment and our belief systems. People's connections with parks are integral to the significance of cultural landscape.⁷

People have strong connections to specific parks, particularly local and regional communities where there are historic connections of use, such as camping, fishing or grazing. These places become an expression of a community's cultural heritage and social values through the telling of its stories. For example, in the development of the *River Red Gum Parks Management Plan 2018*, an inter-generational connection between visitors and specific sites within the Murray River parks corridor was documented. Recognition of people's connection to places will continue to be considered as part of park planning and management, particularly when a change of use is proposed.

The spiritual connection of Traditional Owners to Country, and the inherent responsibility that is held for ensuring healthy Country, are supported and outlined in Theme 1: Managing Country together.

Parks Victoria recognises that many places are extremely important for Traditional Owners and for non-Aboriginal people, and that these places may therefore have shared heritage value. Contemporary heritage practice emphasises the connections

between all natural and cultural aspects. Parks Victoria will promote a holistic nature and culture journey approach to heritage that recognises the close relationship between people and the natural environment, and that many places hold value for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

To manage and conserve nature in areas identified as having shared heritage value, a co-design approach actively engage with local communities and harness their local knowledge will promote broad public support of projects, increase public awareness, and engender emotional connection to parks, giving people the licence to care and opportunities for action.

Introducing young people to nature helps ensure that they develop an understanding of its many benefits, gain confidence in accessing nature, and develop the passion and understanding to become custodians of the parks and their values in the future.

Education and interpretation programs are essential for enhanced visitor experiences that connect people emotionally and cognitively with nature. Outstanding and contemporary learning experiences connect visitors with parks by building their appreciation and knowledge of the of cultural and natural values and encouraging them to help protect parks.

Education and interpretation are transformative learning practices, which both seek to deepen understanding (knowledge), foster pro-conservation values (appreciation), and empower positive behaviours.

Parks contain the most diverse portfolio of historic places and collections on public land in Victoria. There are at least 140 heritage places of national and state significance and many other places of regional and local significance. In addition to Aboriginal cultural heritage places, the parks contain the remains of thousands of historical archaeological sites that tell the story of the state's historic settlement, growth and change. There are strong community connections to these places, and people expect to be able to access them to connect to the rich stories. It is important to link contemporary culture to places of heritage significance. Access to these places, which can be through enabling new uses and innovative presentation of historic buildings and places, also provides wonderful opportunities for learning, community use and social connection, and delivers benefits to regional economies.

It is important that everyone feels safe and welcome in parks, including women, children, and members of the LGBTIQ community. Safety will be considered in park planning, design principles and ongoing operations. Incorporation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) processes will reduce the incidence and fear of crime. This is likely to help improve the quality of life for individuals and communities that use parks.










Above: Buchan Caves Reserve

Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

- 6.1 Acknowledge the close relationship between people and parks, and that many places hold significant history for all people.
- 6.2 Recognise and share stories about past connections people and communities have had, and continue to have, with parks.
- 6.3 Recognise the connection of Traditional Owners and Country, which includes land, water, coast, sky, fauna, and all aspects of culture.
- 6.4 Provide opportunities for life-long learning in natural environments through delivering and supporting education programs and interpretation across parks, including, for example, Junior Rangers and citizen science programs.
- 6.5 Enable new connections between people and parks, including those from diverse backgrounds and abilities, including through activation of historic places in parks that facilitate strong cultural connection.
- 6.6 Implement Healthy Parks Healthy People programs in partnerships with the health, community and outdoor recreation sectors that will further activate parks for nature-based mental, social and physical health benefits, including enabling access for all abilities and greater inclusion of under-represented groups.
- 6.7 Integrate safety, especially of women, children and LGBTIQ people and gender equality in park planning and management as well as through application of CPTED principles.
- 6.8 Maintain and improve where feasible the condition of significant non-Aboriginal heritage values.

Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Sustainable Development Goals
<p>6. Communities and people of all backgrounds and abilities are advocates for parks.</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and wellbeing of communities through contact with nature. • Connection to parks and nature for communities from diverse backgrounds, abilities and under-represented groups. • The level of awareness of the cultural values of heritage places. • Volunteer opportunities for activities and involvement in Parks Victoria. • Access to life long learning experiences in, about and for parks. 	      



Theme 7: Contributing to the Visitor Economy



Dandenong Ranges National Park

Victoria's parks have great economic value to the state and regional economies.⁸ Parks attract tourists, income and jobs to regional and local communities. Overall, the state's tourism industry contributes over \$26 billion annually to Victoria's economy, and in 2017-18 generated over 230,000 jobs. It is important to protect and conserve the natural, cultural and social values within parks that encourage visitors.

Recent surveys of park visitors indicate high levels of satisfaction. Experiencing nature offers people many benefits and helps demonstrate the importance of protecting the environment. If parks are valued by people, they are more likely to be advocates for parks and their effective management.⁹

Parks contribution to the visitor economy is supported by commercial arrangements between Parks Victoria and private providers, partnership programs such as with Visit Victoria, and DJPR through delivery of the state-wide visitor economy masterplan and nature-based tourism plans. Nature-based tourism is the fastest growing tourism sector in Australia, and there is an opportunity to embrace this growth within Victoria's parks¹⁰, which is an important contributor to regional economies.

Parks Victoria's Licensed Tour Operator Framework provides effective support for the tourism industry and contributes valuable revenue for park management through the more than 3 million visitors experiencing parks with these operators annually.

Licensed Tour Operators have the ability to connect people to the parks experience and play an important role in extending the Healthy Parks Healthy People messages. Parks are increasingly popular locations for events, art spaces, visitor service businesses, restaurants and cafes, retail spaces, accommodation, and education and training providers. To protect parks and visitor experiences, the location, nature and operation of these activities must be consistent with park objectives, deliver benefits to the park, have minimal impact on park values and comply with local government planning schemes.

With changing community expectations about the types and quality of park infrastructure and services, Parks Victoria will continue to explore opportunities for new in-park environmentally sustainable services, some delivered in partnership with private operators, to meet visitor needs and to manage visitation demands. This will involve ensuring that operators pay appropriately for the business that they generate through the parks.

Any surplus funds generated by Parks Victoria through these arrangements will be invested back into park management, including conservation programs. These opportunities can include different accommodation types, including roofed accommodation, and other new products and services that complement and enhance the visitor experience.

Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

- 7.1 Recognise the importance of visitation and recreation and the health and economic benefits to the Victorian community.
- 7.2 Ensure that existing and proposed private operations add value and deliver benefits for parks, meet legislation and planning requirements, comply with regulations and are consistent with park environmental, cultural, heritage and social objectives.
- 7.3 Work to ensure that commercial operations, third party operators and Parks Victoria's own business operations in the parks are efficient and sustainable and support employment, access, quality park experiences and regional growth.
- 7.4 Adapt and reuse heritage places where appropriate to support tourism, commercial and community activities.
- 7.5 Develop experiences and appropriate accommodation in key parks that are consistent with the values and purpose of the park, meet visitor expectations, and legislative and planning requirements.
- 7.6 Partner with Traditional Owners and tourism industry organisations to initiate and promote innovative nature-based and cultural experiences that are sustainable and sensitive to the landscape and Traditional Owner values
- 7.7 Support events, Licensed Tour Operators and other activities in and adjacent to parks that deliver clear benefits for parks and minimise adverse impacts on park values and improve efficiency of administration.
- 7.8 Develop and deliver against environmental sustainability targets in parks and support tenants and Licensed Tour Operators in their sustainability initiatives that contribute to sustainable organisational operations.

Case study

Grampians Peaks Trail


The Grampians Peaks Trail (GPT) is one of Victoria's iconic long distance trails, showcasing the beauty and majesty of Gariwerd (Grampians) National Park's natural and cultural landscapes. By improving existing tracks and constructing new tracks, Parks Victoria has developed a 160-kilometre world class natural and cultural hiking experience that can be undertaken in sections or as one 13-day/12-night hike. The trail has been developed with Traditional Owner involvement and through community consultation. Opened in November 2021, the GPT provides:

- significantly improved cultural heritage protection, interpretation and design.
- greater accessibility by increasing and diversifying walk options, trail difficulty and accommodation types.
- a significant economic uplift, including through higher yield visitors for local businesses.



Above: Hiking the Grampians Peaks Trail

Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Sustainable Development Goals
<p>7. Regional economies and parks benefit from healthy parks and nature-based tourism.</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature-based tourism facilities and access in the right places. • Opportunities for LTOs involvement in delivering nature-based tourism and outdoor education. • Cultural tourism led or supported by Traditional Owners. 	  

Theme 8: Managing Infrastructure and operations



Solar panels
Gabo Island Lighthouse

Within Victoria's parks there are buildings, facilities and other assets, including roads, offices, camping infrastructure, piers, sports fields, dams, communication towers, power supply equipment and water pipes, with a total value of around \$1.8 billion. This park infrastructure protects the environment, enables visitors to enjoy and safely access parks, and helps staff undertake conservation and emergency management work.

An objective of park management is to mitigate the adverse impacts associated with development and provision of infrastructure in parks. Sustainability principles will be incorporated into the design, performance criteria, material selection and location of park infrastructure, which also must be resilient to extreme weather and fire.

New facilities will incorporate universal design principles and allow, where practical, adaptation for changing visitor needs. These principles consider the needs of all visitors, including those with disabilities, the elderly, families with young children and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Unless regularly maintained, infrastructure degrades. In parks, this deterioration can harm the environment, reduce visitor services and add to costs. The condition of many assets needs to be improved, especially as visitor numbers and expectations rise and the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt. Parks, particularly in regional Victoria, are major tourism attractors. Some facilities and services at flagship destinations, such as Wilsons Promontory and the Alpine National Parks, currently do not meet the expectations of local, interstate and international visitors.

Urban parks, such as Albert Park, Plenty Gorge Park and Jells Park, provide extensive visitor experiences, recreational and sporting opportunities and health and wellbeing benefits to Victorians and visitors. They are the first experience many people have with parks, and the quality of this experience can influence views on the values of parks more broadly as well as the interest in further visits. The quality of infrastructure in these parks has a big impact on the quality of these experiences, and therefore the careful design, location and ongoing maintenance of assets are important.

Parks Victoria has responsibility for managing the largest, most diverse and significant collection of non-Aboriginal heritage places on public land in Victoria. This includes hundreds of historic places ranging from large complex cultural landscapes, such as Werribee Park, Point Nepean Quarantine Station and Forts, and the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, to alpine huts, lighthouses, archaeological sites, gardens, cemeteries, monuments, and shipwrecks. Parks Victoria also manages thousands of heritage objects in collections associated with significant places.

Infrastructure renewal is often required following fires and floods. Parks and their facilities can be closed for periods following these events, and rapid but thorough assessments of damage are important. Opportunities will be taken to consider how and where facilities are best rebuilt, including using new designs and materials that are more resilient, and locating facilities in safer or more efficient areas.

Licensed critical infrastructure, such as power lines and water pipes, occurs in parks. Park planning considers this infrastructure, its security and the safety of visitors, in collaboration with the agencies that own and operate it.



Case study

Parks Victoria's most remote solar power system

Until 2017, Parks Victoria staff and guests staying on Gabo Island relied exclusively on a diesel generator and battery storage for electricity. With the installation of a 10 kW solar power system, the sun is now playing a major role in meeting the island's electricity needs.





The 32-panel solar power system substantially improves environmental, economic, and social benefits, and there are fewer safety risks with transporting fuel to the island. The greenhouse gas emissions reduction is estimated to be about 17 tonnes a year, and there are significant cost savings through reduced fuel, maintenance, and generator depreciation.

Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

- 8.1 Plan, build and manage infrastructure based on universal design principles to ensure it is safe, fit-for-purpose, adaptive where practicable, sustainable, secure, provides value for money, and meets increased and diverse visitation needs.
- 8.2 Collaborate with Traditional Owners in the planning and design of infrastructure in parks.
- 8.3 Invest in the lifetime cost of infrastructure maintenance and renewal to enable visitors to access and experience parks, to protect the environment from impacts, and support the park workforce in undertaking conservation and emergency management work.
- 8.4 Strengthen environmental design and impact assessment, including communicating to industry seeking projects and activities in parks to ensure proposals meet or exceed contemporary environmental and planning standards.
- 8.5 Manage assets with heritage values appropriately to ensure their conservation, and support visitation or adaptive re-use where appropriate.
- 8.6 Ensure utility assets within parks are licenced and managed safely and with minimal adverse impact on park values.
- 8.7 Rapidly assess the impacts of extreme weather events on park infrastructure, prioritise recovery works, and identify opportunities to improve the design and/or location of replacement infrastructure.

Together, these priorities will help achieve the following Outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

Outcome	Outcome Indicators	Sustainable Development Goals
<p>8. Sustainable assets and park management provide quality visitor experiences and protect natural and heritage values.</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and services provide high-quality and safe visitor experiences in the right places. • Commercial activity, including events, that is appropriate given park and site values. • Application of sustainability practices and universal design. • Maintenance of existing assets and ongoing conservation works to protect natural and cultural heritage assets. 	   



Implementation Approach

The strategy will be implemented through:

- park management decision-making guided by the principles, outcomes and priorities set out in the strategy.
- park planning when developing or reviewing park management plans.
- other Parks Victoria strategies, plans, policies and guidelines as they are developed or reviewed.
- the use of other Parks Victoria park management processes and tools.
- partner organisations developing or reviewing relevant strategies and plans.

This is outlined in Figure 6: Framework for park planning and management decision-making. Principles inform managed decisions and the decisions are implemented through key strategies, plans and tools available.

Park management plans – which may be for a single park or may cover multiple parks within a landscape – are the primary tool for documenting the management intention for those parks.

When park management plans are developed or reviewed, Parks Victoria will use the principles, outcomes and priorities set out in this strategy to inform its decisions as needed and to guide the plan development or review process.

The development or review of a park plan is also a key opportunity for partners, stakeholders and the community to contribute to the park management direction-setting for that park. At the commencement of a park planning process, Parks Victoria will communicate how and when consultation will occur.

Parks Victoria will report on progress with implementing this strategy every 3 years.

The strategy will be reviewed at least every 10 years, or when directed to do so by the responsible Minister.

Case study

Planning with the community at Point Nepean

Point Nepean has a rich history as a significant place for Traditional Owners, military training and defence, immigration, quarantine and, most recently, as a national park. In 2016, Parks Victoria commenced a review of the Point Nepean National Park Master Plan to ensure it would continue to protect the park's significant landscape and heritage and would reflect contemporary community aspirations.

The review involved extensive community and stakeholder engagement, including through the release of a discussion paper followed by a draft master plan for consultation. This was complemented by onsite public information days, meetings with community and stakeholder groups, and an online questionnaire.

The new master plan was released in early 2018. It builds on the wealth of knowledge gathered during the engagement process.

The plan, which has strong community support, provides for a range of park services and activities, balances the possible uses identified for the Quarantine Station precinct and heritage buildings, and protects this significant park to ensure its rich history and environment are conserved for future generations. Implementation of the master plan is being overseen by Parks Victoria in close consultation with Traditional Owners and with community input.

Park planning and management decisions informed by:

Guiding Principles

Protect natural and cultural values

Prepare for the future

Maintain and strengthen the parks estate

Use expert knowledge and evidence-based management

Promote public safety

Connect with community

Build partnerships

- Land tenure – legislated purpose of land reservation
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage – Traditional Owner connections to Country and legislated requirements
- Conservation – values and legislated requirements
- Historic Heritage – Values and legislated requirements
- Anticipated future changes – environmental, social
- Evidence based – science, Traditional Owner knowledge
- Managing risk for park visitors
- Diverse opportunities for health and wellbeing – healthy parks healthy people
- Community support – volunteering, education
- Partnership opportunities
- Best practice planning and design – sustainable operations

Park planning and management decisions implemented through:

Parks Victoria

- Key Strategies
- Park Management Plans, Master Plans
- Conservation Action Plans, Visitor Experience Framework, Managing Country Together Framework
- Assessment tools
- Environmental, Heritage, Visitor capacity, Cultural Heritage
- Park Policy, Procedures, Guidelines

Partner organisations

- Influencing and informing their strategies and plans
- Government Policies and Strategies Biodiversity 2037, Victorian Climate Change Strategy
- Joint Management Plans, Country Plans
- Traditional Owner agreements, plans and knowledge management bridging tools

Figure 6: Framework for park planning and management decision making



Appendix One

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relevant for the LMS

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals statement is the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. Parks Victoria is committed to contributing to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Good health and well being

Parks provide many opportunities to support people to be healthy and well in nature. This is done in balance with the protection of the cultural and natural values that make these parks special places. Parks also provide critical environmental services including clean water and air, refuge, sequestering carbon, reducing heat island effect in built up areas and mitigating climate change.



Quality education

Learning in nature connects visitors with parks by building their appreciation and knowledge of the cultural and natural values within them. Parks Victoria aims to provide experiences suitable for all people to continue to learn in and for our parks.



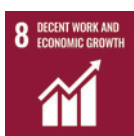
Gender equality

Parks Victoria acknowledges and supports people from diverse backgrounds and abilities to come and enjoy our parks. Universal design standards guide the development of places and activities to provide welcoming and inclusive experiences.



Clean water and sanitation

Water supply catchments in parks managed by Parks Victoria provide a safe, clean water supply for the community. Parks Victoria continues to work to reduce impacts on marine parks, lakes, and waterways, and to manage these important catchments in partnership with Catchment Management and Coastal Authorities.



Decent work and economic growth

Parks support local economies through jobs, liveability and tourism. The development of more diverse and environmentally sustainable tourism operations and visitor services that support local economies and communities is supported and encouraged by Parks Victoria.



Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Built facilities are key to supporting staff, visitor services and visitors. By improving the design and choice of materials for new infrastructure we are working towards achieving better environmental and sustainability outcomes and providing facilities that are adaptable over the life of the asset.



Reduced inequalities

Parks Victoria partners with and supports Traditional Owners to realise self-determination and recognise and integrate their land management practices supporting park health and ongoing connection to Country.



Sustainable cities and communities

Parks Victoria plans for and manages significant large green and blue spaces, including the delivery of new urban parks. This includes improving access and opportunities for people to connect with parks in a sustainable way. This is supported through educating communities, and businesses, who provide events and commercial operations within parks, on how they can improve their sustainability practices within parks.



Responsible consumption and production

Parks Victoria is working towards more environmentally sustainable products in the building of infrastructure in our parks, and supporting commercial operations, events, not-for-profit organisations, and visitors, to use natural resources more efficiently, and reduce and recycle waste. This will be supported by developing strategies to minimise our carbon footprint in the management of parks and visitor services.



Climate Action

Parks will be managed in the context of climate change. Planning for and managing parks to be resilient through change and to protect and nurture biodiversity across the estate, while recognising that all species will not be able to survive the changing climate and its impacts.



Life below the water

Victoria's network of Marine Protected Areas, waterways and coastal areas under Parks Victoria management will be effectively managed and continue to deliver and support conservation programs with Traditional Owners, partners and the community.



Life on land

Many of Victoria's terrestrial parks and reserves are managed by Parks Victoria and will be planned and managed to deliver world-class park estate through programs to protect and conserve environmental, cultural and social values.



Peace, justice and strong institutions

Parks Victoria manages the park estate on behalf of the community and can earn their trust by being accountable and transparent in how decisions are made.



Partnerships for the goals

Parks Victoria works in partnership with Traditional Owners, other government agencies, visitors, Friends of Groups, volunteers, Non-Government Organisations, Licensed Tour Operators, neighbours and contractors to deliver park services and programs to improve broader environmental impacts across landscapes and improve community health and wellbeing outcomes.



Endnotes

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