LAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Protecting our natural and cultural heritage for future generations

DRAFT | Sept 2021
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.
Review of the Land Management Strategy

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.

This draft Land Management Strategy was approved by the Board of Parks Victoria in August 2021 for submission to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for release for public comment.

Your submission is invited on this strategy

This draft Land Management Strategy is now released for public comment until 5:00pm, Monday 1 November 2021. Interested individuals, community organisations, groups and agencies are invited to make written submissions.

All submissions are public documents within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act 1982. Please do not include personally identifying information in the body of your submission. If you want to discuss this further please contact parkstrategy@parks.vic.gov.au.

Submissions can be:

Mailed to:
Manager Park Management Planning
Parks Victoria
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Emailed to: parkstrategy@parks.vic.gov.au


All submissions will be carefully considered when the final strategy is being prepared for approval.

For further information Phone: 13 1963

Copies may be downloaded from the Parks Victoria website ‘www. parkweb.vic.gov.au’ or purchased for $10 (including GST) from:
Parks Victoria
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street
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Introduction

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 land 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 consolidate our biodiversity and reduce the growing number of threatened species recorded in Victoria.

Victoria’s increasing population and popularity as a tourist destination mean more people 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. This is a great opportunity for more people to connect with nature and cultural heritage, and for them to enjoy the many benefits of being in a park. However, more visitors can add pressure on the environment and visitor facilities, and impact on the visitor experience.

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.

In 2020 and 2021, the world has been 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 not yet known 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 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.
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 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 cultural and environmental values.

All of this highlights 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 long-term 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 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.

Key parks are an important component of Australia’s National Reserve System, 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.

Mount Buffalo National Park
Figure 2. Parks Victoria managed parks and reserves: including joint managed parks with Traditional Owners

Protecting our natural and cultural heritage for future generations
Protecting our natural and cultural heritage for future generations
Blue Sprite, Murray River Reserve
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 3 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.

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

Note: this strategy does not apply to the local ports managed by Parks Victoria under the Ports Agreement between the Minister for Ports and Parks Victoria.
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.

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 recently 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, Long-term 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. These components are illustrated in Figure 4.

Twelve Apostles Marine National Park
Aspirations 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.

Using the guiding principles and implementing the priorities set out in this strategy will help achieve the following 8 integrated, long-term 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.
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. This 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 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. 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.
Connect with community

Diverse opportunities will be provided for the community to enjoy and benefit from parks, through recreation activities, events, tourism activities, education 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 and post-contact 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 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:

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 long-term outcome that implementation of these priorities will help achieve, along with indicators that will be used to track progress. Case studies are presented outlining a relevant land management practice.

Cope Hut, Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing, Alpine National Park
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 Framework 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.

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.
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.

**Priorities**

**Parks Victoria will:**

1. Work in partnership with Traditional Owners to support the principles, objectives and outcomes expressed in the Cultural Landscapes Strategy (see Figure 5.).

1. Support self-determination for Traditional Owners as owners and rights holders over public land, including protection and recognition of cultural and natural values in the joint management of parks.

1. Improve tools, procedures and knowledge to effectively protect and restore Aboriginal cultural heritage on parks, in partnership with Traditional Owners.

1. Support cultural landscapes as the basis for planning and management.

1. 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. Work to ensure that the cultural values and impacts of visitation are appropriately managed for commercial, visitor economy and tourism opportunities.

1. Share experiences, skills and resources between Parks Victoria and Traditional Owner partners to increase shared capacity to protect cultural landscapes.

The Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy (2021) details Traditional Owner goals for Country. The strategic framework below sets out the 5 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.
Together, these priorities will help achieve the following long-term outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.
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 Conservation. 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. It also acknowledges the importance of cultural landscapes for Traditional Owners and for broader natural system health and community resilience.

State of the Parks 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 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.

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**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 Incorporate research, citizen science and Traditional Owner knowledge into evidence-based management underpinned by Conservation Action Plans.

2.4 Address critical information gaps to increase understanding of the environmental and social values and benefits of parks, including management effectiveness and outcomes.

2.5 Develop proposals for, and seek to establish, landscape-scale sanctuaries focused on threatened species, large-scale threat and restoration programs and increased citizen science, volunteer and Traditional Owner participation.

2.6 Adopt a landscape (including cultural landscapes) approach for cross-tenure management of parks and forests for forest health outcomes to respond to the complex and widespread environmental, social and political challenges that transcend existing management boundaries.

2.7 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 long-term outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.

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<th>OUTCOME INDICATORS</th>
<th>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS</th>
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| 2. High-value natural systems and cultural values are protected or restored. | Indicators:  
- Improve condition of ecosystems and habitats.  
- Increase protection or restoration of threatened or culturally significant species.  
- Increase protection of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage values.  
- Improve integration of science and traditional ecological knowledge. | ![Sustainable Development Goals] |
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. 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 them and their ecosystems, and investing in their restoration or enhancement, is therefore vital. There is also a significant mitigation opportunity in reducing the carbon footprint of the many park facilities and services managed by Parks Victoria or licensed operators, as 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 and Traditional Owner applied knowledge and practice to improve the resilience of ecological systems and species in a changing climate.

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 Traditional Owner knowledge.

3.4 Undertake ‘climate ready’ trials to build knowledge of climate impacts on habitat types and most-affected species, and test the effectiveness of adaptation responses.

3.5 Build community capacity and resilience by working with partners to improve understanding of climate change impacts on parks and park experiences.

3.6 Support opportunities for carbon regulation and carbon sequestration in natural systems within parks.

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

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<th>OUTCOME</th>
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</table>
| 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. | Indicators:  
Increase understanding of park ecosystems that best provide climate change refuges, carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services.  
Improve the protection of biodiversity values at risk from climate change impacts through planned adaptation and targeted interventions.  
Improve community understanding of climate change impacts on park values, current and predicted rates of change and what is being done in response. | ![SDG icons](#) |
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. 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 experiences in appropriate areas. 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. There is a need to manage growing and changing visitor demand while protecting park values.

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 behaviour 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 education 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, the Game Management Authority and peak user groups.

Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

4.1 Prioritise the protection of natural and cultural heritage values when planning visitor experiences.

4.2 Manage visitation relative to park visitor carrying capacity and communicate management approaches effectively to visitors.

4.3 Ensure park design and planning provides for inclusive experiences and access for people from culturally and linguistically diverse and low socio-economic communities, people with a disability, the elderly, 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 encourage active and healthy people and communities.

4.9 Research and monitor changes in 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 education and monitoring, to reduce adverse impacts on parks and visitors.

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

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<tr>
<td>4. Visitors enjoy high quality experiences and are empowered to make informed decisions about where they go and what they do in parks.</td>
<td>Indicators:</td>
<td>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve alignment of park settings and experiences with visitor demand and expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase the numbers and times that parks and visitor sites are open, safe, and clean.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase the number of parks that provide for diverse settings, are equitably distributed and manage capacity and impacts of visitation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve pre-visit information and in-park interpretation and information to enable informed decision-making and compliance.</td>
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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, and community groups to be more efficient and to achieve greater benefits at a landscape scale. Park management partnerships include:

- Traditional Owners (see Theme 3: 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.

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, 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. 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. Successful partnerships involve strong governance, pooling knowledge, and building people’s 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 0.5-1 m 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.

Sea urchins, Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park
Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

5.1 Establish and support partnerships with 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 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.

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

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<td>5. Partnerships increase park management capability and capacity, and enable management across boundaries at the landscape scale.</td>
<td>Indicators:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Improve the effectiveness of existing and new partnerships.</td>
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<td>Increase the number and quality of cross-tenure agency and organisation partnerships.</td>
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<td>Increase the number and quality of volunteer partnerships.</td>
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Splendid Fairy-wren (Photo: Thomas Hunt)
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.8

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 3: 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 involving the community 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 to enhance visitor experience and connecting with nature. Everyone benefits from quality, timely information about parks and the value they offer.
Outstanding and contemporary learning experiences connect visitors with parks and encourage them to help protect parks and the values within them.

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. 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.

Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

6.1 Acknowledge the close relationship between people and the natural environment, 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 Provide information about park values using diverse communication methods to support enjoyable, safe and appropriate experiences in parks.

6.4 Provide opportunities for learning in natural environments through delivering and supporting learning programs and interpretation across parks, including, for example, Junior Rangers and citizen science programs.

6.5 Enable new connections between people and parks, especially for 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 LGBTQ people in park planning and management as well as through application of CPTED principles.

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

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<tr>
<td>6. Communities and people of all backgrounds and abilities are advocates for parks.</td>
<td>Indicators: Improve the health and wellbeing of communities through contact with nature. Improve connection to parks and nature for communities from diverse backgrounds, abilities and under-represented groups. Improve the level of awareness of the cultural values of heritage places. Increase volunteer opportunities for activities and involvement in Parks Victoria. Improve access to life long learning experiences in, about and for parks.</td>
<td>cabin, green building, windmill, water, eye, hands, world, peace, partnership, money, heart, hand, goals</td>
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Contributing to the Visitor Economy

Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens, Dandenong Ranges National Park

Protecting our natural and cultural heritage for future generations
Victoria’s parks have great economic value to the state and regional economies. 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. 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 through delivery of strategic 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 parks, 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. 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.

**CASE STUDY**

**Grampians Peaks Trail**

The Grampians Peaks Trail is planned to be 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 is developing a 160-kilometre world class walking experience that can be undertaken in sections or as one 13-day walk. The trail is being developed with Traditional Owner involvement and through community consultation. When completed, the walk will provide:

- 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.
Priorities

Parks Victoria will:

7.1 Ensure that existing and proposed private operations add value and deliver benefits for parks, meet legislation and planning requirements and are consistent with park environmental, cultural, heritage and social objectives.

7.2 Work to ensure that private operations and Parks Victoria’s own business operations in the parks are efficient and sustainable and support employment, access, quality park experiences and regional growth.

7.3 Adapt and reuse heritage places where appropriate to support tourism, commercial and community activities.

7.4 Develop, where appropriate in partnership with private operators, sustainable tourism businesses, including nature-based attractions, 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.

7.5 Partner with tourism, industry organisations and Traditional Owners to initiate and promote.

7.6 Innovative, nature-based and cultural experiences that are sustainable and sensitive to the landscape and Traditional Owner values.

7.7 Improve diversity, culture and inclusion access to parks via third-party operators that appeal to different target markets, communities and visitor segments.

7.8 Support events, Licensed Tour Operators and other activities in parks that deliver clear benefits for parks and minimise adverse impacts on park values, and improve efficiency of administration.

7.9 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.

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

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</table>
| 7. Regional economies and parks benefit from healthy parks and nature-based tourism. | Indicators:  
Increase nature-based tourism, with facilities and access in the right places.  
Increase opportunities for LTOs involvement in delivering nature-based tourism and outdoor education.  
Increase cultural tourism led or supported by Traditional Owners. |  |
Managing Infrastructure and Operations

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 much of the state’s historic heritage. 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.

**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 Incorporate climate change resilience in design and location of infrastructure and consider relocation of assets when risk of loss or damage to infrastructure significantly increases.

8.3 Invest in 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 to ensure proposals for projects and activities in parks 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 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 long-term outcome and Sustainable Development Goals, with success measured against nominated indicators.
Implementation

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.

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**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

**LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (IMPLEMENT THROUGH PRIORITIES)**

- Traditional Owner self-determination is advanced through managing Country together.
- High value natural systems, cultural heritage and landscapes are protected and restored.
- 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.
- Visitors enjoy high quality experiences and are empowered to make informed decisions about where they go and what they do in parks.
- Partnerships increase park management capability and capacity and enable management across boundaries and at the landscape scale.
- Communities and people of all backgrounds and abilities value and are advocates for parks.
- Regional economies and parks benefit from healthy parks and nature-based tourism.
- Sustainable assets and park management provide quality visitor experiences and protect natural and heritage values.

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**PARK PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS IMPLEMENTED THROUGH:**

**Parks Victoria:**
- Key Strategies.
- Park Management Plans, Master Plans.

**Assessment tools:**
- Environmental, Visitor capacity, Heritage status.
- Park Policy, Procedures, Guidelines.

**Partner organisations:**
- Influencing and informing their strategies and plans.
- Joint Management Plans.
- Traditional Owner agreements, plans and knowledge management bridging tools.

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**Figure 6.** Framework for park planning and management decision making
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.
Endnotes


