Your Submission Is Invited On This Plan

This draft strategic directions plan for Woowookarung Regional Park is now released for public comment. Interested individuals, community organisations, groups and agencies are invited to make written submissions by Monday June 11th 2018. Submissions can be mailed to:

Manager
Regional Delivery Western Region
Parks Victoria
Level 10, 535 Bourke St
Melbourne VIC 3000

or emailed to: woowookarung@parks.vic.gov.au  or

lodged online via the project page at: www.engage.vic.gov.au/woowookarung

All submissions will be carefully considered and taken into account when the final strategic directions plan is being prepared for approval. The names of people and groups making submissions will be published in the final plan unless comments are marked as CONFIDENTIAL when submitted.

For further information on this plan, please phone the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963.

Copies
This draft plan may be downloaded from: www.engage.vic.gov.au/woowookarung

Copies of the draft plan may be purchased for $10 (including GST) from: Parks Victoria Information Centre
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone: 13 1963

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images, names, quotes and other references to deceased people.
Acknowledgements

The draft plan was prepared and released under direction of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The draft strategic directions plan has been guided by the Project Steering Committee comprising, the Friends of Canadian Corridor, Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation; the City of Ballarat, the Department of Health and Human Services and Parks Victoria.

Parks Victoria would like to acknowledge the input and assistance of the many other people and stakeholders who have generously given their time and energy in participating in the preparation of the plan including:

- Field Naturalist Club of Ballarat;
- Ballarat Bushwalkers;
- Goldfields Track Inc.;
- Mt Clear College;
- Federation University;
- Ballarat Sebastopol Cycling Club (BSCC);
- Pax Hill Activity Centre (Scout Camp);
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) staff.

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Parks Victoria, Melbourne.

Disclaimer

This draft plan is prepared without prejudice to any negotiated or litigated outcome of any native title determination applications covering land or waters within the plan’s area. It is acknowledged that any future outcomes of native title determination applications may necessitate amendment of this plan; and the implementation of this plan may require further notifications under the procedures in Division 3 of Part 2 of the Native Title Act 1993 (Cwlth).

The plan is also prepared without prejudice to any future negotiated outcomes between the State or Federal Governments and Victorian Aboriginal communities. It is acknowledged that such negotiated outcomes may necessitate amendment of this plan.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this plan is accurate. Parks Victoria does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence that may arise from you relying on any information in the publication.

Intact forest within Woowookarung Regional Park
Acknowledgement of Country

The authors respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land in which Woowookarung Regional Park sits - the Wadawarrung people of the Kulin Nation, their spirits, ancestors, elders and community members past and present. Parks Victoria on behalf of the Victorian Government acknowledges the significance of the study area, the Wadawarrung people and seeks to reflect the views, interests and aspirations of the Traditional Owners in managing the park.

Document Revision

July 2017  Revision A
December 2017  Revision B
February 2018  Revision C
March 2018  Revision D
May 2018  Revision E
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Introduction

The Many Stories of Woowookarung Regional Park...
Woowookarung Regional Park is a new park for Ballarat. Located less than four kilometres from the city centre, the park is Ballarat’s largest and will offer an exciting range of activities and experiences for all people.

The City of Ballarat is the second largest regional city in Victoria and is currently experiencing a second ‘gold rush’, with rapid economic and population growth expected to grow from 101,000 in 2015 to 145,000 in 2036\(^1\). In the coming decades, Woowookarung will become as important to Ballarat as the city’s two other big parks; Lake Wendouree and Victoria Park. The lake was created in the 1860’s during the gold rush and Victoria Park in the late 1880’s, and since their creation both parks have been hugely important to the city, providing the people of Ballarat with large parks to undertake recreation and sporting activities.

In the same manner, Woowookarung will become an equally important park for Ballarat and the region, providing much needed parkland on the eastern side of the city as the population continues to expand, and becoming a wonderful counterbalance to Victoria Park and Lake Wendouree in the west.

The benefits that accrue from the creation of Woowookarung will be many; the health of the community depends on the critical ecosystem services such as clean air and fresh water that functioning ecosystems in the park will support. Woowookarung also plays an important ecological role providing regional connectivity between a series of valuable ecosystems from Enfield State Park in the south to Creswick Regional Park in the north.

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\(^1\) Today Tomorrow Together: The Ballarat Strategy 2015, City of Ballarat, 2015
It is very rare that a new 640 hectare park the size of Woowookarung is created and the story of the creation and naming of the park should be celebrated.

The Creation Of The Park
The park is an important expression of community participation, organisation and strength. The creation of the park is the result of grass roots community activism led by the Friends of the Canadian Corridor (FoCC). Upon hearing of the impending return of the plantation lands to the State Government in 2012, the FoCC lobbied for the creation of the ‘Canadian Park’, requesting that all candidates in the 2014 State election “commit in writing that your leader and party will provide funding for the establishment of a Canadian Multi Use Forest Park”.

In 2015, the Canadian Regional Park Bill was introduced into the Victorian Parliament and in 2016 the park was formerly gazetted, an extraordinary legacy to the commitment of the local community who have advocated for the creation of a new park that will benefit people for many decades to come.

The Naming Of The Park
In 2016 the park was renamed from Canadian Regional Park to Woowookarung Regional Park. The park sits within the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people. Woowookarung is a Wadawurrung name and means ‘place of plenty’. The naming of the park is a reminder of the importance of this landscape to the traditional owners and their ongoing connection to country. The name reflects the traditional use and connection that Wadawurrung people have with the area.

"Woowookarung embodies the spirit and the history of this place, which provided food, medicine, water, shelter and raw materials for Aboriginal people. In Wadawurrung language Woowookarung means ‘place of plenty’ "  says Uncle Bryon Powell, Elder and Chair of the Wadawurrung. This is a great opportunity for the wider Ballarat community to demonstrate recognition and respect for its Aboriginal people, as well as celebrate and acknowledge the area’s unique cultural heritage.

01  Uncle Bryon Powell, Letter to DEEWR, February 2016
View looking east across the park towards the city in 2016
The Park Plan

When Woowookarung Regional Park was created in 2016, Parks Victoria became the responsible state government authority tasked with developing a plan to guide its future direction and ongoing management. The plan provides a unique and exciting opportunity to re-imagine the role of a regional park adjoining a rapidly growing city. The Park Plan is a visionary document that provides a clear direction for the future of the park and its evolution over the coming decades.

Development of the Woowookarung Strategic Directions Draft Plan has been informed by extensive engagement with community, stakeholders and planning partners throughout 2017 to help guide decisions around the planning and management of the park based on its natural and cultural values and realise the many aspirations for the park as an important community and recreational asset.

The discussions, ideas and feedback received over this period builds on the excellent groundwork prepared by the Friends of the Canadian Corridor during the park advocacy phase01 and in-depth community consultation undertaken by DELWP in 2015 prior to the establishment and renaming of the park in 2016.

Quick Park Facts

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<tr>
<td>Park Size</td>
<td>640.94 hectares</td>
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<tr>
<td>Former Plantation Size</td>
<td>269 hectares (42%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Highest Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lowest Point</td>
<td>445 metres elevation</td>
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Legend

A  Woowookarung Regional Park
B  Lake Wendouree
C  Victoria Park
Context plan showing Ballarat’s parks orbiting the city.
Community Consultation

Parks Victoria has worked in close collaboration with a broad range of interest groups and partners to realise the rich potential for Woowookarung including Wadawurrung, the Traditional Owners, the local community and interest groups including the Friends of Canadian Corridor, City of Ballarat, park residents, user groups and organisations, schools, universities, tour operators and the broader Victorian community. Engagement activities include:

- **Briefings and workshops** with community and user groups, the Friends of the Canadian Corridor, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, the City of Ballarat and Federation University
- **Open house sessions** to provide opportunities to comment on initial planning concepts and themes attended by community, tour operator, recreational and user groups
- **An online survey** to test ideas and concepts for the park which received 143 responses
- **Information and displays** at the Ballarat Library and Visitor Information Centre over a three-week period
- **Site visits** with Ballarat based education, council, tourism and health organisations
- **Direct mailouts, emails and social media advertising** to promote engagement opportunities
- **Pop ups** at key Ballarat events including Spring Fest and Smart Building and Living Expo
- **Eight submissions** from individuals, park users, community and recreational groups and the Friends of Canadian Corridor.

The planning process oversight has also been integral to the plan’s development under the governance of a working group, steering committee and control group made up of Parks Victoria staff, Wadawurrung traditional owners, strategic partners and key agencies who meet monthly. In addition, a number of workshops, forums and meetings have been held to build partnerships with government, health professionals, researchers and local organisations to activate the park plan and create healthy and vibrant community outcomes as part of Parks Victoria’s Health Parks Healthy People program.

Project Vision

The consultation approach and vision for Woowookarung has been informed by the following Guiding Principles, which were identified by the local community throughout the development of the Park Plan.

**Community Vision**

To provide an innovative, collaborative and inspirational park that conserves the special and unique values of Woowookarung Regional Park, and supports a happy, active and healthy community.

**Guiding Park Principles**

**Conservation**

- Respect and enhance the ecological and cultural values of the park.
- Improve stream and waterway health within the park.

**Accessibility**

- Make the park accessible to a wide range of visitors of all ages and people of all abilities.
- Provide a wide range of activities and experiences within the park, that attracts a broad cross section of the Ballarat community to foster a strong connection and appreciation for the park.
- Manage impacts on the environment and ensure activities do not compromise the conservation principles.
- Improve connections between the park and the local community to support a happy, active and healthy community within a rapidly growing city.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for learning in nature, highlighting the values of the park, particularly focused on children and youth.

**Governance And Sustainability**

- Work in partnership on country and celebrate the Wadawurrung people and cultural heritage of the park.
- Provide exemplary park management that supports the social, cultural and environmental values of the park.
- Facilitate ongoing dialogue, collaboration and coordination with local government agencies, land managers, community stakeholders, clubs and organisations.
Shaping Our Future

**Shaping Our Future** outlines Parks Victoria’s vision, purpose and strategic directions for the next decade. This plan identifies a vision for Parks Victoria to be a world-class park service ensuring healthy parks for healthy people. In delivering on this vision Parks Victoria aims to inspire the community to conserve and enjoy Victoria’s unique natural and cultural heritage. Together, we care for Country and promote the value of our parks and waterways for the benefit of all Victorians and their visitors.

Four pillars explain the vision and purpose and how it will be achieved.

**Connecting people and parks** aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Victorians through the management of a parks estate that is valued by the community.

**Conserving our special places** aims to increase the resilience of natural and cultural assets in parks and maintain ecosystem services in the face of climate change and other stressors.

**Providing benefits beyond boundaries** recognises the organisations role in contributing to the safety, living standards and well-being of Victorians.

**Enhancing organisational excellence** is focused on improving the organisations capacity and capabilities and recognises the important role of our partners in achieving the desired outcomes.

Shaping our future is underpinned by the Healthy Parks Healthy People approach which this plan will further explore and activate.

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### Healthy Parks Healthy People Activation

Time spent in the park will be essential to improving the physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing of the community and will help mitigate many of the current health epidemics, such as obesity, cardio-vascular disease and depression. Contact with nature has positive effects on our ability to concentrate, learn, solve problems, relax and it boosts our immune system. Investment in the park will also contribute a variety of economic benefits, including, reduced burden on health services and increased land values, to greater productivity and creativity for local communities.

Parks Victoria’s Healthy Parks Healthy People approach aims to unlock the power of nature and parks for their preventative and restorative health and wellbeing benefits, while conserving biodiversity.

Parks Victoria is actively seeking partners to support, advocate and grow Healthy Parks Healthy People in parks. Woowookarung Regional Park will have a Community Health Activation Plan developed during 2018 to collaboratively drive actions in priority areas including:

1. **Cross sector partnerships with the conservation, health, community, education and tourism sectors**
2. **Community activation programs in parks to benefit healthier ecosystems and healthier communities**
3. **Park experiences and infrastructure that offers diverse and inclusive opportunities for people to improve their health and wellbeing in nature**
4. **Working with researchers and Traditional Owners to further strengthen the knowledge and evidence for the health benefits of parks and nature**
5. **Growing awareness of the benefits of healthy parks for people’s wellbeing and promoting the benefits of time in nature for all.**

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![Diagram: Healthy Parks Healthy People Activation](attachment:diagram.jpg)
Despite the close proximity of Woowookarung Regional Park to the centre of Ballarat, the land the park occupies has always been in the background and difficult to see...

The Forest

At its closest point, the park sits less than four kilometres from the centre of Ballarat. The creation of the Park consolidates 32 existing parcels of Crown land, comprising the Canadian State Forest, large areas of unreserved land formerly managed by the Victorian Plantations Corporation (VPC) for timber production and a handful of smaller reserves and unreserved parcels of Crown land.

Prior to the creation of the Park in 2016, Woowookarung has been known as the Canadian Forest. In the last one hundred and eighty years, the forest has always existing as the backdrop to Ballarat, the horizon to the city. In countless photographs and paintings, the forest has been present in the background forming Ballarat’s horizon. It is a dark line of vegetation sitting on the horizon punctuated by the distinctive bulge of Mount Warrenheip.

Likewise, it has also been in the background of people’s imagination, largely invisible and perhaps a reason why the forest has remained despite being so close to the city. The old saying ‘can’t see the forest for the trees’ is particularly apt for Canadian forest, which despite its proximity has remained in the background to people’s imagination.

The Park Plan is about bringing the forest to the foreground, making it an active and visible part of the city.
Context aerial photograph showing parks orbiting the city (2016)
Ballarat's Horizon Line

Canadian Forest as the backdrop to the city (Source: State Library of Victoria)
Woowookarung Regional Park is a place with many stories to tell, creating a rich tapestry of ideas, events and memories that have shaped the landscape we experience today.

Just as the Canadian Forest has existed in the background of Ballarat, many of these stories are also hidden from view. The creation of the Park is an opportunity to tell these many and varied stories. These stories will play an integral role in the way people understand and experience the park and landscape.

**Physical Stories**
These are the stories of the physical environment, such as the topography, geology, hydrology and ecology of the park. These elements greatly influence the way in which you experience the park, and include:

- **Views** - with the removal of the plantations, there are some excellent views overlooking Ballarat from the park;
- **Topography** - subtle but constantly undulating topography with steep embankments;
- **Shallow Soils** - the shallow soils make the ground susceptible to erosion if damaged or disturbed;
- **The Forest** - the presence of a large forest of trees so close of the city;
- **Size** - the size of the park is big enough to get lost, yet small enough to walk around.

**Indigenous Stories**
The Wadawurrung have continuously occupied this land for over 1000 generations (>25,000 years). The park is imbued with their stories.

- **Creation Stories** - The park landscape is part of the creation stories of the traditional owners;
- **The Six Seasons** - the annual seasonal cycle that better describes the changing climate throughout the year, referencing environmental events such as plant flowering, fruiting and animal behavioural patterns.
- **Care for Country** - The traditional owners have an ongoing connection to place;
- **Fire Stick Farming** - Managing the landscape using traditional fire stick farming techniques may help manage the park today;
- **Cultural Heritage** - there are likely artefacts within the park which need to be protected;

**Environmental Stories**
These stories outline important environmental qualities of the park. Some are obvious (such as the grass trees) while other environmental stories are emerging (such as the effects of climate change).

- **Rare and threatened plants** - the park has over 180 indigenous plants including 2 state level significant plants (penny leaf flat pea, Yarra gum);
- **The park sits within the Victorian Central Uplands bioregion, with 2% of the park is listed as Valley Grassy Forest, a vulnerable EVC within the region**
- **Animals** - the park is home to many animals, including the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Black Wallaby, Short-beaked Echidna, Koala, Agile Antechinus and common Brushtail Possum;
- **Climate change** - a changing climate will affect how the ecology of the park operates;
- **Carbon sequestration** - the forests play an important role in sequestrating (extracting and storing) carbon from the atmosphere helping to offset carbon dioxide emissions;
- **Grass trees** - One of the icons of the park, yet in need of protection from possible infection from cinnamon fungus (Phytophthora cinnamomi).
Immigration Stories
These stories relate to the many ways in which the forest has been used and modified since the arrival of non-indigenous Australians.

- **Gold mining** - The ongoing search for gold within the park has left visible traces on the landscape;
- **Rifle Ranges** - the park has been the location for two rifle ranges, which have left their mark on the landscape.
- **Development of the City** - the population of Ballarat is expected to grow by over 40,000 people by 2036 (growth of 30%);
- **Demographics** - 35% of Ballarat’s current population of just over 100,000 people is less than 25 years of age.
- **Citizen Advocacy** - The creation of the park is the direct result of citizen advocacy - without the Friends there would be no park today.
- **Weeds** - There are 10 declared noxious weeds and 61 environmental weeds recorded in the park which present ongoing threats to the health of the park.

Productive Stories
As the park name “place of plenty” suggests, Woowookarung has a long history of people using the park for productive purposes.

- **Indigenous Resource** - the Wadawurrung have long used the forest as a source of many useful materials and foods;
- **Gold mining** - the park has long been used in the search for gold;
- **Firewood** - people have been collecting firewood from the forest for many years;
- **Forestry** - the park has been used for commercial forestry since the 1960’s when the first plantations were established;
- **Infrastructure** - the park is home to a range of services and infrastructure including power lines, water tanks and telecommunications pylons.

Personal Stories
These are the many individual and personal stories that are embedded in people’s memories and experiences of the park. These stories are often invisible to others, yet when considered collectively, provide considerable meaning and importance to the park, informing the range of activities that take place and how people engage with the park.

- **Childhood Stories** - many people have memories of the park as children;
- **Family Connections** - the park is a place for families to come together;
- **Neighbours** - many people live adjacent to the park, forming strong connections with the landscape;
- **Diverse Activities** - People continue to use the park in a diversity of ways.
Eight Strategic Directions

Making Sense of the Park...
**EIGHT STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE PARK**

**Strategic Direction 01 - Celebrate the Culture**
Woowookarung Regional Park has a rich and varied history full of many different stories. These stories are embedded in many places of interest throughout the park. Telling the stories of the park is a vital aspect.

- Goal 1A - Celebrate Cultural Connections
- Goal 1B - Celebrate Immigration Connections
- Goal 1C - Curate Rich & Varied Experiences
- Goal 1D - Name Important Sites

**Strategic Direction 02 - Nurture the Ecology**
Woowookarung Regional Park has been a forest for many, many years, and although highly disturbed by different activities in recent times, there remain important ecologies that must be protected and nurtured.

- Goal 2A - Nurture Areas of Ecological Importance
- Goal 2B - Restore the Waterways
- Goal 2C - Activity Based On Ecological Sensitivity

**Strategic Direction 03 - Optimise Land Management**
Woowookarung Regional Park is highly fragmented with a long boundary which poses significant challenges to the operation and management of the park. An important long term strategy is to build resilience by working with other land managers, service providers and private landholders to optimise complementary land management activities.

- Goal 3A - Optimise the Roads & Tracks
- Goal 3B - Integrated Land Management
- Goal 3C - Management of Infrastructure

**Strategic Direction 04 - Regenerate the Forest**
The forest has always been central to the identity of Woowookarung Regional Park, forming the horizon line to the city. Yet over time, the forest has become increasingly fragmented, resulting in a forest that is difficult to see. Reuniting the forest fragments and regenerating the former plantation lands is the key to the creation of the park.

- Goal 4A - Create Ecological Corridors (High Priority Zone)
- Goal 4B - Manage The Weeds
- Goal 4C - Implement A Balanced Fire Management Regime
Strategic Direction 05 - Develop Loops & Circuits
The primary way of experiencing Woowookarung Regional Park is to travel along a path. The creation of multiple loops and circuits through the park that cater for different interests, ages, fitness levels and modes of travel is an important park design principle.

- Goal 5A - Provide Primary Loops & Circuits
- Goal 5B - Provide Secondary Loops & Circuits
- Goal 5C - Provide Specialty Loops & Circuits

Strategic Direction 06 - Create Forest Visitor Sites
Throughout Woowookarung Regional Park are a range of destinations and locations that require the provision of certain facilities that support the user activities and experiences. These visitor sites are connected by the loops and circuits which, together, form an integral component to how people will experience and navigate through the park.

- Goal 6A - Create Primary Forest Visitor Sites
- Goal 6B - Create Secondary Forest Visitor Sites
- Goal 6C - Provide Neighbourhood Forest Trailheads

Strategic Direction 07 - Connect to the City
The success of the park will be dependant on the creation of excellent physical connections between Woowookarung Regional Park and the surrounding suburbs of Ballarat. The Park is the largest park within Ballarat, and along with Lake Wendouree and Victoria Park, forms part of a significant trifecta of large, important parks orbiting the city.

- Goal 7A - Establish Connections To The Park
- Goal 7B - Establish Ecological Corridors Between Park & Creek
- Goal 7C - Manage The Park Interface

Strategic Direction 08 - Connect People & the Park
A key component of the park plan is bringing Woowookarung to the foreground of Ballarat and making the park valued and relevant. The ongoing success of the park is reliant on making strong and enduring connections between people and the park and encouraging a strong sense of ownership and pride in the park.

- Goal 8A – Activate Health Partnerships
- Goal 8B - Support Events In The Park
- Goal 8C - Foster Community Participation
Woowookarung Regional Park has a rich and varied history full of many different stories. These stories are embedded in many places of interest throughout the park. Telling the stories of the park is a vital aspect.

Celebrating Culture in the Park

Woowookarung Regional Park is a place with many interwoven stories to tell, creating a rich tapestry of ideas, events and memories that have shaped the park and landscape we experience today. Just as the Canadian Forest has existed in the background of Ballarat, many of these stories are also hidden from view.

Crucial to the Park Plan is the celebration of culture and the telling of the park stories. The development of the park is an opportunity to tell these many and varied stories, all of which contribute to the understanding of the Woowookarung, and will play an integral role in the how people experience the park.

Celebrating culture extends across time, representing both the traces from the past, such as cultural heritage, as well as current social values which shape how we view the park today.
What is Cultural Heritage?

As defined by ICOMOC (International Council on Monuments and Sites), cultural heritage is “an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Cultural Heritage is often expressed as either intangible or tangible cultural heritage.”\(^1\) As part of human activity Cultural Heritage produces tangible representations of the value systems, beliefs, traditions and lifestyles. As an essential part of culture as a whole, cultural heritage contains these visible and tangible traces from antiquity to the recent past.\(^2\)

For the purposes of this plan, we have assumed cultural heritage to include evidence of more than 30,000 years of occupation of Victoria by Aboriginal people, and of the more recent period of settlement and immigration by non-Aboriginal people. All heritage material can provide us with important information about past lifestyles and cultural change, and cultural heritage places provide reference points around which the wider heritage landscape can be understood. Preserving, enhancing and where possible interpreting these important and non-renewable resources is encouraged.

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What Are Social Values?

Whereas cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community in the past, social values are an expression of the current customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expression and values of a community today. Social values are an expression of what people think and feel about something and are a quantification of the importance people place of different aspects of their lives. Social values exist as both personal expressions, as well as cultural values which reflect a shared set of common values, social expectations and collective understandings.

In regards to the creation of Woowookarung Park, social values identify how people relate to and feel about the park. This includes how and why they use the park, and how much they value the park. The Park Plan becomes an expression of both cultural heritage and social values through the telling of the many stories of Woowookarung Regional Park.
Goal 1A - Celebrate Cultural Connections

The Wadawurrung people are the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Woowookarung Regional Park has been created. The park forms an important part of the traditional landscape that they have cared for over many thousands of years. This landscape allows the Wadawurrung to continue to undertake their traditional practices and maintain a strong spiritual connection with the land. Respecting their culture and connection to country is vital to the success of the park.

Proposition 01 - The Tank Canvas

There is an opportunity to utilise the Central Highlands Water water tanks as a large canvas which can contain a mural depicting Wadawurrung connections to the park. This takes its inspiration from other well known mural projects, most notably Yarrambiack’s painted disused silos by internationally renowned street artist Adnate.

Strategies

1. Work in partnership with traditional owners on the development of the park plan and establishment and ongoing management of the park.
2. Present and support opportunities for the Wadawurrung to tell their stories of the land including the role the landscape played as a resource (a ‘place of plenty’).
3. Present and support ongoing connections to country, including the revitalisation of the traditional landscape and the continuation of ceremony;
4. Create a park that becomes an important site for indigenous and non-indigenous groups to collaborate and interact.
5. Recognise the potential for cultural heritage places to exist in the Park;
6. Ensure that no Aboriginal cultural heritage is impacted without appropriate management, including undertaking a cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) on a voluntary basis for any high impact activities;
7. Consider developing a park-wide Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement (ACHLMA) in partnership with the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (WAC), as the RAP;
8. Develop the six seasons for the park in terms of understanding the natural rhythms of the park’s ecologies, how to best interact with them for their protection, enjoyment and learning.
9. Explore the role of traditional owner burning practises in the ongoing ecological management of the park.
10. Explore opportunities to incorporate a large mural around the Central Highlands Water tanks reflecting the stories and identity of the Park, working with Wadawurrung traditional owners seeking their guidance and approval on final designs.

[Refer to Appendix A - Canadian Regional Park Cultural Values Assessment, Extent Heritage Advisors, 2017 prepared as part of the development of the Park Plan.]

[ibid]
**Goal 1B - Celebrate Contemporary Connections**

The park has undergone extensive change and alteration since colonisation. These changes have helped shape the landscape we experience today. There remains a fascinating scattering of gold mining relics throughout the park, including dams, water races, shafts and excavations. The forest has been extensively used to harvest fire wood since colonisation, while more recently portions of the forest have been used for silviculture. Stories to tell include:

**Gold Mining**

The ongoing search for gold within the park has left visible traces on the landscape. The landscape of the park has been constantly affected by human interventions. The evidence of extensive water catchment techniques such as water races are still evident within the park, an important reminder of the extent of human modification.

**Tracks & Trails**

There is a history of track making within the park. People have constantly wandered across this landscape, resulting in a filigree of paths crossing the park.

**Rifle Ranges**

The park has been the location for two rifle ranges, which have left their mark on the landscape.

**Development of the City & Demographics**

The population of Ballarat is expected to grow by over 40,000 people by 2036 (growth of 30%). 35% of Ballarat’s current population of just over 100,000 people is less than 25 years of age.

**Citizen Advocacy**

The creation of the park is the direct result of citizen advocacy - without the Friends there would be no park today.

**Weeds**

There are 10 declared noxious weeds and 61 environmental weeds recorded in the park which present ongoing threats to the health of the park.

**Firewood**

People have been collecting firewood from the forest for many years;

**Forestry**

The park has been used for commercial forestry (sylviculture) since the 1960’s when the first plantations were established and has greatly shaped the park. How the forest regenerates within the former plantation blocks is a fascinating story to tell. This involves techniques to repair a highly disturbed and damaged landscape.

**Infrastructure**

The park is home to a range of services and infrastructure including power lines, water tanks and telecommunications pylons.

**Fire Management**

An important story is how to use fire management to improve the ecological health of the park, while protecting adjacent properties. There is growing interest in traditional aboriginal fire stick farming techniques to ‘care for country’.

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**Strategies**

1. Tell the story of the park’s evolution and change since the arrival of non-indigenous Australians, including the impacts of gold mining, fire wood collection and other activities.

2. Recognise the role the forest has played as a productive resource, including the role of forestry within the park.

3. Celebrate the recent story of the creation of the park and its new role as an important community asset.
Potential view of the Tank Canvas
Goal 1C - Curate Rich & Varied Experiences

Carefully curate and foster a diversity of activities and experiences which encourage people of all ages to regularly come to Woowookarung. Activities may include walking, trail running, bicycle riding, family gatherings and barbecues, whilst experiences may include star gazing, wildflower walks, bird watching and nature based activities. These activities and experiences combine to create a unique and exciting park rich with stories and meaning.

Strategies

1. Provide a diversity of different activities within the park that cater to all ages, interests and abilities.
2. Carefully manage the relationship between the many different activities within the park to ensure safety and equity of access for all park users.
3. Design and manage the park to ensure no single activity or user group adversely impacts on the ability of other users to enjoy or use the park.
4. Design the park to highlight and capitalise on the many unique and interesting experiences the park has to offer, including view lines, topography and wildlife.
5. Tell these diverse stories in the design of the park’s facilities and experiences, including signage, structures, park information and interpretations plan.
Mountain biking
Recreational riding
Learning to ride
Family rides
Cyclo-cross

Bush walking
Walking clubs
Organised walks
Wildflower walks
Ranger guided walks

Picnics & barbecues
Family gatherings
Parties & get together
Community meeting place
Engagement with community

Jogging
Geocaching
Trail running
Orientating
Rogaining

Mountain biking
Recreational riding
Learning to ride
Family rides
Cyclo-cross

Nature observation
Bird watching
Animal spotting
Wildflower spotting
Nature photography

Wadawurrung history
Cultural ceremonies
Welcome to country
Cultural material collection
Cultural education activities

Engagement with community
**Goal 1D - Name Important Sites**

The recent renaming of the park from Canadian Regional Park to Woowookarung Regional Park has been extremely important in providing a new identity for the park. The name means 'place of plenty' and reflects many aspects of the park’s evolution. Yet many important sites and features of the park remain unnamed and consequently out of sight. There is an important opportunity to name features within the park to help give identity and meaning, make the park more visible and to reveal the stories embedded within the Park. The naming of key features and sites will also assist in navigation and way finding.

Parks Victoria is the naming authority responsible for investigation and determining place names on the land it manages, and has in place appropriate naming procedures and conventions to facilitate the naming of important features and sites within the park. Community consultation would be undertaken, including consideration of aboriginal names (in conjunction with the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation).

**Strategies**

1. Undertake to name and/or rename key park features and sites that reflect the important stories of the landscape and park and aboriginal names for these features.

2. Undertake to name and/or rename the creeks and waterways within the park to give them more prominence and identity.

Refer to Parks Victoria’s Place Name Assignment Procedure PRO 717

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Woowookarung Regional Park has been a forest for many years and although highly disturbed by different activities in recent times, there remain important ecosystems that must be protected and nurtured.

**Why are the Ecologies Important?**

Underpinning the park’s creation is a strong environmental vision presented by the community that recognises the value of existing ecologies within the park and identifies the need to both protect and enhance these ecologies. What is unique and important about Woowookarung is the presence of functioning ecologies so close to a large city.

These ecologies provide homes to many important plants and animals, significantly contributing to the biodiversity of Ballarat. These ecologies also provide opportunities for people to engage more directly with Nature and to develop greater empathy and affinity for natural systems. This empathy is crucial if we are to successfully tackle the enormous environmental challenges posed by ongoing climate change, environmental degradation and population expansion.
Existing Ecologies Of Importance

There are a number of existing ecological vegetation classes (EVC) within the park. Ecological vegetation classes are groupings of vegetation communities based on floristic, structural, and ecological features. These EVC descriptors form an important beginning point for understanding the ecology of the park. A significant portion of the park (370 ha or 57%) is mapped as Heathy Dry Forest. About 11 hectares (or 2% of the park) is mapped as EVC 47 Valley Grassy Forest, which is considered to be vulnerable (threatened) in the bioregion. The remaining 41% of the park are the regenerating former plantation blocks which are currently unmapped within the EVC assessment. Despite this, as the forest regenerates this land will play an increasingly important role within the overall ecological operation of the park.

Significant Plants & Animals

The park is home to a wide variety of plants and animals, including two plant species of state significance (the Penny-leaf Flat-pea and the Yarra gum). The impressive stands of grass trees within the park are a significant and unique feature of the park. The park contains a wide range of fungi and orchids. Native mammals recorded in the park include the Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Black Wallaby, Short-beaked Echidna, koala and Common Brush-tail Possum. A native vascular flora list provided by the Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat (FNCB 2016) includes 182 indigenous species and 70 introduced species of plants found within the park.

In 2015, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) noted that "there are locally significant populations of Austral Grass-tree (Xanthorrhoea australis), particularly in the north. These are a very attractive visual component of the understorey and contribute to the habitat value of the area for native fauna. Stands of Brown Stringybark (Eucalyptus baxteri) are considered locally significant as this species is uncommon around Ballarat. There are also locally significant records of Rough Tree-ferns (Cyathea australis) in several creek-lines in the proposed park."

In 2017, a desktop natural values assessment was undertaken as part of the development of this park plan. The assessment identified 240 indigenous vascular plant taxa, 5 lichen and mosses, 107 indigenous bird species, 4 indigenous mammal species and an unknown number of reptiles, amphibians and invertebrate species. For more information on the natural values of the park, please refer to the appendices to the Park Plan.

Connectivity

An important prerequisite for ecological resilience and health is connectivity. The Park’s ecology will be richer and more resilient the more connected it is, both within the park itself (local connectivity), but also with habitats beyond the park (regional connectivity). Regional connectivity plays an important ecological role linking valuable ecosystems at a broader level, from Enfield State Park in the south to Creswick Regional Park in the north.
Goal 2A - Nurture Areas Of Ecological Importance

The existing ecologies within the park are an extremely important asset; the Park Plan must support the conservation of these valuable qualities. This includes undertaking a more thorough ecological mapping of the park to better understand how ecologies within the park operate and where sensitive areas of ecological importance are located. At the time of preparing this plan, there has been limited mapping undertaken of the ecologies within the park - this will become an extremely important next step to better inform the implementation of the plan.

Environmental Sensitivity Criteria

In the absence of detailed ecological mapping for the park, a preliminary assessment of ecological sensitivity has been undertaken. The following criteria have been used in the development of the environmental sensitivity mapping:

- **Main Roads**: Buffer 40 metres
- **Minor Roads**: Buffer 20 metres
- **Tracks & Trails**: Buffer 10 metres
- **Boundaries**: Buffer 40 metres
- **Steep Land**: Refer topography analysis
- **Power Lines**: Buffer 50 metres
- **Easements**: Buffer 20 metres
- **Endangered EVC**: As mapped

The map shows areas of the park where there is a greater likelihood of more intact forest (shown in red), and therefore greater ecological sensitivity. It is based on excluded areas where disturbance is likely, based on given offsets from a range of elements (including roads, tracks, boundaries, steep topography and infrastructure).

This analysis is desktop only, designed to provide guidance on the development of this Park Plan, including consideration of the type and location of different park assets. Thorough site investigations, surveying and mapping will be required to further develop the sensitivity maps and to better understand the ecologies within the park.

Strategies

1. **Undertake a more detailed and thorough investigation and mapping of the existing ecologies within the park to inform the park design process.**

2. **Implement design measures to conserve and protect areas of sensitive or high value ecological importance within the park.**

3. **Design the park by locating park assets to protect and enhance areas of ecological sensitivity.**
Goal 2B - Restore The Waterways

Woopookarung Regional Park sits at the very top (headwaters) of the Barwon River catchment. Many of the permanent and ephemeral creeks, waterways and drainage lines within the park have been severely disturbed and many remain unnamed. Yet waterways are crucial to the support of many ecologies, providing water for fauna and an expanded diversity of flora within the park. There is an important opportunity to rehabilitate many of these creeks and waterways, which in turn will greatly enhance the ecologies within the park.

Waterway Sensitivity Criteria

The following criteria have been used in the development of the waterway sensitivity mapping and takes into account original waterways located within intact areas of forest, as well as disturbed waterways located in the former plantation blocks. While all water courses within the park are disturbed, many located within the former plantation blocks were obliterated during the management of the plantations and are hence considered severely disturbed. Most of the dams within the park have been artificially created yet still play an important ecological role.

Original Waterways (Intact Forest Blocks)  Buffer 100 metres
Disturbed Waterways (Plantation Blocks) Buffer 25 metres
Dams Buffer 50 metres

The plan shows areas of the park where there is likely to be greater ecological sensitivity based on the location of existing waterways and dams. This analysis is desktop only, designed to provide guidance on the development of this Park Plan. Thorough site investigations, surveying and mapping will be required to further develop the sensitivity maps and to better understand the ecologies within the park.

Strategies

1. Design the park to support the rehabilitation of streams, creeks and waterways which form a crucial component of the functioning ecologies within the Park.
2. Protect the fragile riparian zones from activities that pose a threat to the ongoing health and viability of these ecologies.
3. Develop loop walks that allow access to the rehabilitated water courses within the park, through sensitive design measure such as elevated boardwalks, bridges and track alignment.
4. Design areas and visitor facilities within the park where people can enjoy the streams and waterways and be educated about the value of these important yet fragile ecologies.
Existing Stream

The image below shows an existing water course on the former plantation block just below the proposed Amphitheatre site. The land including the former stream, was significantly disturbed when the blue gum plantation was removed in 2012. Ruts and furrows from earth moving equipment are still obvious, creating deep pools of water. Jeff Rootes from the Friends of the Canadian Corridor is testing the depth of the pool.
Proposed Stream

The restored waterway in this location comprises a reconstructed creek bathymetry which supports a diverse riparian zone and biotic diversity. Over time, as the surrounding forest regenerates, tree ferns repopulate the creek.
Goal 2C - Activity Based On Ecological Sensitivity

One of the most important ideas within the Park Plan is to locate all activities within the park based on an understanding of the ecological sensitivity of the landscape. Sensitivity may be based on areas of known importance, high quality and diversity, areas of excellent grass trees, areas where the risk of phytophthora spreading is higher (e.g. tops of hills), intact areas of forest, areas susceptible to erosion, existing waterways, creeks and damp areas and the location of historic relics and artefacts.

Area of Greater Disturbance Mapping

The following diagram identifies areas of the park that are more highly disturbed, and likely to be of lower ecological importance, and thus more suitable for the location of park assets; in other words, this map shows land not identified within the Environmental or Waterway Sensitivity Mapping. It is important to note that this analysis is desktop only, designed to provide guidance on the development of the Park Plan. Higher value ecological features may be present anywhere within the park, and will need to be confirmed by thorough site investigations, surveying and mapping to better understand the ecologies within the park.

Strategies

1. Locate high intensity /large footprint activities to areas of greater disturbance which may include areas within the former plantation blocks where disturbance is currently higher and damage to the landscape is greater. Higher intensity activities can also include the use of existing roads and tracks as demonstrated by this map.

2. Allow lower intensity activities (such as walking) within the existing forest blocks.

3. Remove all activities that pose a risk to the existing ecologies within the park, including 4WD and trail bikes, and firewood collection.

4. Locate activities on flatter land which is more stable and less susceptible to erosion.

Legend

- Area of Less Sensitive Land
Woowookarung Regional Park is highly fragmented with a long boundary which poses significant challenges to the operation and management of the park. An important long term strategy is to build resilience by working with other land managers, service providers and private landholders to optimise complementary land management activities.

Ecological Threats To The Park

There are a range of threats and constraints to the ecological operation of Woowookarung including lack of conservation reservation, internal fragmentation, high risk from edge effects, risk of disturbance, high risk of human impacts and disturbance, proximity to major roads, urban effects (heat island, pollution, changes in moisture), predation by dogs, cats and foxes, high risk from introduced plant species and impacts by proposed roads.

Lack Of Conservation
As the city continues to grow and density increases, it is crucial to ensure the existing higher quality ecosystems within the park are protected, and where possible, expanded, both in terms of quantity as well as quality and configuration of habitat. Habitat is essential to the survival of organisms and when quantity and quality is reduced, the survival of species that live there is threatened.

Fragmentation
This is where habitats (corridors and/or patches) are not lost completely, but instead become fragmented and disjointed, and are no longer connected. Fragmentation is problematic because it separates individual species from both their larger population, as well as important resources necessary for survival. Habitat fragmentation is typically caused by a wide variety of human activities and structures including roads, logging, and other development. Woowookarung Regional Park is highly fragmented.
Within the park, habitat is fragmented by barriers such as roads, tracks, power line easements, and fences, all of which dramatically reduce the ease by which animals can move through the landscape. “Roads are a major cause of habitat fragmentation and can disrupt the population processes of some wildlife species.” This plan aims to find ways to reduce fragmentation and disturbance to provide a more contiguous park environment to aid the movement of fauna and visitors.

**Edge Effects**

Edge effects are the physical and biological changes (including species composition) that occur towards the edge of fragmented habitats. Edge effects of particular concern include hunting by domestic cats, wildlife disturbance by dogs being walked, disturbance by path users, disturbance by trail bikes and illegal vehicle use, light pollution from street lights, noise pollution and effect on nocturnal invertebrates, noise from roadways, rubbish dumping, slashing of grasses as part of fire prevention works, nutrient-enhanced storm water runoff, which aids the growth and spread of invasive weeds.

Parks with extensive boundaries such as Woowookarung are particularly vulnerable to these effects. Typically, "the width of a habitat link needs to be more than twice that over which edge disturbances influence sensitive species and ecological processes, to ensure that some portion is relatively free of disturbance."02

**Disturbance**

Urban biodiversity is also threatened by repeated and ongoing disturbance to the landscape, which is typically high in urban areas. Disturbance greatly diminishes the effectiveness of plantings in supporting biodiversity, due to the regular and often extensive damage to habitat. Disturbance prevents ecological succession, which is a necessary part of a functional and healthy ecosystem. Succession allows for ecologies to change, evolve and adapt over time, as well as to recover from disturbance.

Strategies to consolidate the park footprint and reduce the boundary length to build ecological resilience and strength should be explored in Woowookarung as a long term priority.

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02 Merri Strategy, pg 68
**Goal 3A - Optimise the Roads & Tracks**

The Park currently has approximately 200 kilometres of roads and tracks managed by both the City of Ballarat and Parks Victoria. The network has evolved over time in a planned and ad-hoc manner reflecting the parks many prior uses. These roads currently carry traffic in, around and through the Park providing for visitors to explore the park and serving local community access. These roads and tracks also serve a number of management functions accessing key infrastructure, for fire management and maintenance purposes.

Investigations to date have identified that these roads now contribute to the highly-fragmented park that is not meeting contemporary needs. They pose a significant disturbance threat to the ecological functions of the Park causing barriers to movement of wildlife and edge effects through the disturbance of flora and fauna. Pathogens such as cinnamon fungus (Phytophthora cinnamomi) have the potential to seriously affect grass tree populations as well as species composition within the park, which are spread more rapidly by vehicle traffic. These threats are impacting on the ecological functions and resilience of the forest.

A particular issue for the park is the high volume and excess speed of traffic on through roads creating issues for visitor safety and the visitor experience from increased noise, dust, and potential collision with other non-vehicle based park users.

A crucial need for the park is the review and rationalisation of the extensive network of roads and tracks to achieve a sustainable network that meets visitor, neighbour, community, other authority and park management objectives. This review would occur in consultation with the City of Ballarat, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), other authorities and the community.

**Strategies**

1. Undertake a detailed audit and review of vehicle access and use in the park;
2. Work with the City of Ballarat to identify the proposed road and track network to be retained for vehicle use;
3. Rehabilitate tracks that are not required for any purpose that can improve the ecological function of the park;
4. Identifying tracks to change to Management Vehicle Only;
5. Identify tracks to be re-purposed for trail-based use;
6. Maintain remaining park roads in line with the Road Management Act 2004 in order to provide safe vehicle access to visitor sites and to undertake park management activities.
7. Work with the City of Ballarat to investigate reducing speed limits and other speed limiting mechanisms throughout the park to improve visitor safety
8. Provide the community with appropriate information and maps covering the updated road and track access through and around the park.
1930 Aerial Photograph showing extent of track making throughout the forest

Legend

City of Ballarat Roads
Tracks & Trails (Parks Victoria)
Existing Track

The image below represents a typical track condition within the park. These tracks get used by a variety of users, including walkers, bike riders, trail bike riders and four wheel drive enthusiasts. Over time, there is a tendency for these tracks to expand with use, encouraging larger and larger vehicles. Once established and the vegetation destroyed, the tracks become susceptible to erosion leading to further damage and rutting.
Proposed Track Closure

Track closure and restoration will allow the forest greater opportunity to regenerate by reducing the level of disturbance within the Park by expanding areas that are inaccessible to people. Less disturbance will provide better habitat for plants and animals. Leaf litter and fallen timber will provide a diversity of habitat for small mammals and insects. Revegetated tracks will prevent erosion and hold water on site for longer.
**Goal 3B - Integrated Land Management**

The park currently has several inlier private properties of varying sizes that account for approximately 100ha in total or 13% of the broader footprint of the park study area. Some of these properties are residential properties that are occupied and some are unoccupied properties. One of the challenges of managing parks with inlier properties is the ability to provide a consistent management approach across the park area as a whole.

All of the inlier properties are currently covered by either Rural Conservation Zoning – schedule 1 or 3 of Rural Living Zone. There are also vegetation protection overlays, bushfire management overlays across all properties and Environmental significance overlays covering many areas. An additional environmental audit overlay exists for the former rifle range property. These state planning controls are established to assist in protecting the amenity, biodiversity and landscape and heritage values of areas under those zones, whilst allowing for residential and agricultural use in a rural environment.

From an ecological viewpoint, the goal is to manage for habitat and weed management in a similar way to the rest of the park to avoid barriers to wildlife movement and the spread of weeds. In this park many of the inlier properties are well vegetated that are providing a valuable contribution and continuity to the forest cover through the park. It is recognised that many of the properties are being well managed with similar objectives in mind to the rest of the park.

Fire management is another challenge accounting for the need to protect life and property not only on adjoining land but these inlier areas. These properties create larger boundary ratios that increase the public, private interface and areas to be managed for fire risk.

An additional challenge with inlier properties is that they can be a barrier to visitors being able to move through the park to avoid trespassing as these blocks take up large portions of the broader footprint and are not open to the public.

A key goal for the park is to achieve a consolidated and consistent management approach across all tenures to improve the ecological outcomes, enhance the visitor experience and more effectively manage the park.

**Strategies**

1. **Encourage private landholders on inlier properties to implement programs or additional controls that achieve consistent ecological outcomes that can benefit the whole park.**

2. **Investigate opportunities and agreements with the support of landholders that may permit public access to parts of private land for future trail use.**

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**Legend**

- Complementary Land Management On Inlier Private Properties
Goal 3C - Management of Infrastructure

The park currently has a range of service infrastructure, including high voltage overhead power lines, water pipes and tanks and telecommunications towers. Each infrastructure type has associated levels of disturbance which can inhibit the operation of the park ecosystems. Consideration should be given to strategies which optimise the management of these areas for the benefit of the parks flora and fauna and visitor use whilst acknowledging the important role they play in the broader community.

Strategies

1. Liaise with infrastructure and service providers to ensure that the management of infrastructure elements is consistent with the management of the park, including easements and maintenance access requirements.

2. In conjunction with Central Highlands Water, undertake significant rehabilitation of the existing water easement (adjacent to Olympic Avenue) where there is extensive erosion and damage caused by illegal vehicle access, as well as weed infestations.

3. Work with infrastructure and service providers to improve the interface between fenced infrastructure and the park.
The forest has always been central to the identity of Woowookarung Regional Park, forming the horizon line to the city. Yet over time, the forest has become increasingly fragmented, resulting in a forest that is difficult to see. Reuniting the forest fragments and regenerating the former plantation lands is the key to the creation of the park.

**The Fragmented Forest**
While the forest persists, it has become highly fragmented from its recent history as a plantation. In 2002, plantations were replanted with 300,000 blue gums. In 2012, the plantations were handed back to the Victorian Government. The plantations were felled and the land was cleared in accordance with the requirements of the hand back, resulting in extensive modification to the landscape and a highly fragmented park.

At the moment, the remnant sections of intact forest form a fragmented mosaic across the park. This pattern is spatial, creating significant differences between cleared and uncleared land, a very distinctive condition of the park today.

**The Regenerating Forest**
Now the former plantations are regenerating. As the new forest regrows, the park becomes less fragmented and more cohesive again. The fragments are consolidated, reuniting the forest. The areas of openness that are currently experienced within the former plantation lands will gradually become less open, and more forested as the trees continue to grow. In time, the forest will become whole again.

An important question is what type of forest regrows, especially when there are significant differences in age and vegetation class between the existing intact and regenerating forest blocks. This creates an exciting dynamic.
The Forest as Dynamic, Growing & Changing

It is very easy to view the current condition of the park as largely static and unchanging; however, the forest is ever changing, dynamic and evolving. These changes are often difficult to discern or observe over the shorter time frames of our day to day consciousness, but become very apparent when we view the evolution of the forest over a longer time frame.

An excellent reminder of the evolving nature of the forest becomes apparent when changes to the forest structure are analysed across a longer time frame. The diagrams below show a portion of the forest over an eighty year period between 1934 and 2017. The forest block shown is a privately owned inlier on the south western edge of the park. In 1934, the block is largely cleared and surrounded by intact forest. By 1970, the plantations have been established on the state owned land adjacent to the block. In 2017, much of the forest structure has regrown on the private land, while the forest and plantations have been removed, effectively an inversion of the 1934 condition. The sequence is an excellent reminder that even if nothing is done, the forest will regrow, change and evolve, irrespective of human intent.

Assessing the Regenerating Forest Since 2012

Even the areas of regenerating forest on the former plantation blocks are changing quickly since the final blue gum plantations were felled in 2012. Analysis of different patches within the park clearly show significant changes in the forest structure in the five years since.

The quality of the forest regrowth is variable across the park, with some areas showing excellent regeneration while other areas have struggled, becoming highly weed infested with limited species diversity. An important aspect of the Park Plan is to understand this variable regeneration, and to propose methods to manage the regenerating forest.
**Strategies For Forest Regeneration**

Although highly disturbed by gold mining, track making and firewood collection, the forest canopy has remained largely intact until the timber plantations were established in the 1960’s. The plantations caused severe disturbance to the landscape, fragmenting the forest and dramatically altering the soil profile, hydrology and ecosystem. An important objective of the Park Plan is to regenerate the forest on the former plantations and reunite the forest canopy using innovative regeneration strategies that are achievable and practical to implement.

**What Type Of Forest Should Be Regenerated?**

During the development of this plan, there has been considerable discussion with many people regarding the type of forest that should be regenerated; should the regenerating forest be based on the existing ecological vegetation classes (EVC’s) or should the regenerating forest become something different? This discussion has focused on two issues; firstly, the extent to which the existing EVC’s are representative of the ‘natural’ state of the forest under the stewardship of traditional owners, and secondly, the extent to which the existing EVC’s are appropriate for the park in the context of rapid climate change. The overall goal will be to re-establish the former plantations with EVC’s based on the historical and pre-plantation state. Existing seed beds, surrounding seed sources from existing vegetation and the local soil and climate conditions make this the most viable to restore. These revegetation areas will be managed within the context of changing climate conditions.

In regards to the ‘natural’ state of the forest, there is little doubt that the existing Heathy Dry Forest ecology is reinstating itself. Without significant intervention, the regenerating forest blocks are reverting to a forested state, albeit highly weed infested. Furthermore, the Heathy Dry Forest EVC appears robust in light of climate change, with the likelihood that it can persist in this geographic location as temperatures rise. This EVC is considered to be of least concern in terms of its bio regional conservation status, presumably because it is common and well reserved in the bioregion.

There may also be sections of Valley Grassy Forest (EVC 47) that should also be actively regenerated. This EVC typically occurs along water courses in the valley floor below a certain elevation, and is currently rare in the park, largely due to high disturbance along many water courses (particularly due to gold mining activities). Valley Grassy Forest is considered to be vulnerable in the bioregion and thus becomes an ecology that should be actively supported.
The Regenerating Forest - Former plantation looking towards Lal Lal Drain, 2012

The Regenerating Forest - The former plantation looking towards Lal Lal Drain, 2017
Regenerating Forest Analysis

2010 November 2013 January 2013 December 2014 November

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Goal 4A - Create Ecological Corridors (High Priority Zone)

There are many different strategies for regenerating the forest, dependant on a variety of factors including budget, resources and focus. The strategy proposed within the Park Plan focuses on the creation of ecological corridors that link between existing blocks of intact forest. An ecological (wildlife) corridor is an important method of connecting fragmented habitats. The corridor allows movement between isolated patches of habitat without other disturbances such as traffic or development. “They allow short-term movement of organisms seeking resources and breeding opportunities, long-term change in the distribution of organisms (for example, following suitable climatic conditions), and ongoing ecological processes that underpin healthy environments.”

These corridors become higher priority areas where there is a greater focus on weed removal, planting and management. This strategy builds upon the recent planting undertaken by the Field Naturalists, Parks Victoria, FoCC and the community which provide an ecological link between two existing blocks. This strategy also recognises that there is generally much better regeneration of the forest immediately adjacent to intact forest blocks, where there is greater seed dispersal.

The remaining areas of regenerating forest on the former plantation blocks (outside of the ecological corridors) become ecological patches that need to be carefully managed. These patches are a lower priority than the ecological corridors, which perform a more urgent and direct role in reuniting the forest fragments. The ecological patches vary in condition and ‘weediness’. Therefore a management strategy that promotes natural regeneration, selected weed management and targeted burns should be deployed.

Strategies

1. Undertake further investigation into the current and former distribution of EVC’s (ecological vegetation classes) within the park to better inform the regeneration strategy and Park Plan.

2. Regenerate the forest on the former plantation blocks by creating priority ecological corridors that link intact portions of forest, improving the ecological operation of the park.

3. Investigation should be undertaken into appropriate planting techniques that will expedite the growth of the forest in these high priority corridor locations, including gathering of indigenous seed, propagation of plant stock and whether planting should be undertaken by seed, tube stock or both.

4. Ecological corridors should not be burnt for at least fifteen years, or until the regenerating trees are sufficiently mature to withstand low intensity ecological burns. The burning of regenerating trees that are too young may kill the trees, thereby preventing the forest regeneration process.

5. Provide higher levels of weed eradication and management within the ecological corridors to promote the forest regeneration. These areas become priority weed eradication zones.

6. Provide higher levels of park management and maintenance in these corridor zones.

7. Support and build upon the planting work already completed by the Field Naturalists, and the Friends of the Canadian Corridor (FoCC) which commenced the ecological corridor approach in 2017.

Legend

- Regenerated (Reunited) Forest
Visualising the Regenerated Forest

Understanding how the regenerated forest will appear is useful in imagining the future park. Much of the visual fragmentation of the park today is a result of the recent removal of the former plantation block in the last decade. As the forest regenerates, the existing character of the park will revert to the former forest.
View 02 - Proposed Priority Corridors Growing (2027) - 10 Years

View 04 - Proposed Regenerated Forest With Corridors & Patches (2057) - 40 Years
**Goal 4B - Manage The Weeds**

Weed invasion has been identified as a significant ongoing issue affecting the ecological health of the park. Weeds impact areas of intact forest by invading areas of existing vegetation then consolidating and spreading. In areas of regenerating forest, weeds suppress and smother emerging indigenous vegetation, hindering the regeneration process.

The success of regenerating the forest will rely in large part to the ability to limit weed invasion into the regenerating forest blocks and to develop innovative park planning and management strategies to control the spread of weeds. An important challenge with weed management in the Park is protected indigenous vegetation that may be regenerating in close proximity to weed plants - mechanical clearing and the application of herbicides may kill the regenerating forest as well.

**Gorse (Ulex europaeus)**

Gorse is a prickly evergreen shrub which may grow to a height and diameter in excess of 3 metres. Gorse can be stimulated into germination following burning or mechanical disturbance. Most seeds fall around the parent plant but the pods can split open and shoot seeds for a distance of up to 5m, allowing infestations to spread rapidly. Gorse can also spread from seed movement in water, soil, machinery and footwear. Individual gorse bushes can live for up to 30 years.

Physical removal of gorse will not control an infestation unless it is combined with other methods of follow-up control. Regular slashing or mowing by themselves are not effective in eradicating gorse because plants will regrow from cut stumps or dormant seed in the soil as soon as slashing ceases.

**English Broom (Cytisus scoparius)**

English broom is an upright evergreen shrub and a declared noxious weed. This plant invades all areas except heavily shaded or swampy places. It is a vigorous plant that overtakes large areas, preventing indigenous vegetation from growing. Seeds remain viable in the soil for a long time. Broom can be removed individually by hand, using the ‘cut and paint’ method where the plant is cut close to the ground and poison applied to the cut.

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01 Refer to Natural Values & Habitat Values Assessment, Physii 2017

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**Strategies**

1. Undertake a thorough site audit of weed invasion across the entire Park and develop appropriate strategies to manage and eliminate weeds.
2. Develop appropriate weed management strategies that support the existing and emerging ecologies to flourish in the Park.
3. Prioritise weed eradication on species with small populations in the Park, including English Ivy and Blue Periwinkle. Treating these early will save considerable cost later if these species are allowed to spread.
4. Prioritise weed eradication in areas where weeds are encroaching on relatively intact vegetation. This is likely to occur within the intact forested blocks.
5. Prioritise weed eradication in areas where weeds are suppressing regrowth within the Ecological Corridors (refer Idea 4A - Create Ecological Corridors).
6. Undertake broad scale weed control in dense stands of weed. Care should be taken to avoid soil disturbance.
7. Stop illegal dumping of garden waste by restricting vehicle access to areas within the park.
**Goal 4C - Implement A Balanced Fire Management Regime**

The management of fire in the landscape is a complex task with multiple objectives. Assessments of the park after its transition from a forest and plantation have been undertaken that are guiding an altered fire management approach. Fire management objectives are focused on reducing the risk of wildfire on adjoining life and property and key infrastructure assets in the park along with ecological objectives to maintain habitat, flora and fauna population health.

A unique aspect of this park is the need to develop fire and burn regimes that support the regenerating forest. The transition from plantation to native forest has been assessed through fire modelling and will provide a net reduction in fire risk as previous pine plantations provide an elevated risk. A key focus of future fire management regimes will be to draw on traditional owner knowledge and practices to incorporate those into the current fire management paradigm.

The plan supports a "tenure blind" (cross tenure) management regime that will allow a park wide fire management strategy to be developed in collaboration with inlier and adjacent private property owners, as well as Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning (DELWP), who is the responsible government authority for the development of Fire Management Plans. These plans will identify different fire management zones including Asset protection zones (APZ), bushfire management zones (BMZ), and land management zones (LMZ). These latter zones will be the focus for incorporating greater ecological outcomes.

Developing an appropriate ecological burn regime for Woowookarung will take considerable time and testing. The preliminary ideas within this plan form an important starting point for this discussion, in particular focusing on variable burn regimes for different areas of the park. The Plan identifies three primary areas within the Park that may utilise different ecological burn methods.

**Targeted Burns (As Required) - Ecological Patches**

These burns are deployed as required to deal with specific issues within different ecological patches. This may include more frequent burning regimes in the early years to manage weed infestations (particularly in the southern former plantation blocks), prior to allowing the forest to regenerate. In other blocks, where the regeneration is occurring more successfully, burning may be deferred until trees reach a maturity.

**Episodic Burns (Every 10-15 Years) - Intact Forest**

In recent years, portions of the intact forest have been burnt more regularly (every 5-7 years) to reduce fuel loads for the purpose of asset protection. The effect of frequent fuel reduction burns on the ecological health of the forest is largely unknown. Accordingly to the EVC description, Healthy Dry Forest should experience episodic burns every 20 years to maintain ecosystem health.

**No Fires (Greater than 15 years) - Ecological Corridors**

Where new planting has been undertaken within the ecological corridors to hasten the regeneration of the forest, no fires should be undertaken until the trees have reached sufficient size and maturity to be able to withstand the fire. It is estimated that this may take upward of 15 years or more before a cool burn can be deployed within these areas.

**Strategies**

1. Develop an appropriate ecological burn regime that draws on knowledge of traditional owner burning practices, as well as modern day bush fire modelling techniques to better manage the health of the park, and the risk to adjacent communities.

2. Work with the traditional owners to explore appropriate ecological burn regimes that will support cultural practices as well ecosystem health.

3. Recognise that variable burn regimes may be required to deal with different conditions across the park, and to distinguish between areas of intact and regenerating forest.

4. In partnership with DELWP, continually update the bush fire modelling for the park that accounts for the regenerating forest. As the forest regenerates, the risk to adjacent communities from bush fire will change, requiring the ongoing development of appropriate bush fire modelling.

5. Commence rigorous testing and monitoring of different burn regimes to understand the impacts on the ecology of the park. This information will be crucial to the evaluation of different techniques.
Legend

- **Targeted Burns**
  (As required)
- **Frequent Burns**
  (Every 1-3 years)
- **Episodic Burns (intact forest)**
  (Every 10-15 years)

* Assumes tenure blind management of park
Weeds & Fire Management

This diagram explores the intersection of fire management and weed management within the park, and in particular, whether fire can be used in certain locations as an effective tool to manage serious infestation of weeds. The most likely locations are in the Ecological Patches where regeneration of the forest is poor and weed infestation higher. Ecological burns to manage certain weeds may also be appropriate within areas of Intact Forest, where the trees are sufficiently large to cope with periodic low intensity burns.

Weed management may need to be more intensive within the Ecological Corridors where fire may not be used until the trees within the corridor have reached a certain trunk diameter and size to withstand a low intensity ecological burn.

While the development of an effective fire management strategy will require considerable investigation, testing and analysis in the future, what has become clear through the park planning process is that there is compelling evidence that an effective ecological burn strategy can manage many park issues concurrently, such as weed management, ecological heath, cultural connections to land and asset protection.

Legend - Regenerate the Forest

- Intact Forest Blocks
- Ecological Corridors (Higher Priority)
- Ecological Patches (Lower Priority)
- Priority Weed Zone
The primary way of experiencing Woowookarung Regional Park is to travel along a path. The creation of multiple loops and circuits through the park that cater for different interests, ages, fitness levels and modes of travel is an important park design principle.

Loops and Circuits
The design of the path network through the park is based on the creation of loops and circuits, which allow people to start in one location and return to the same point without having to ‘back track’ (or return via the same path). This provides a more interesting and diverse experience and is a well established principle of trail design (both for walking and riding). The location of each path is based on the sensitivity of the environment through which it travels; in other words, loops and circuits will be optimally located to best support the ecology of the park.

Stacked Loops & Circuits
By carefully designing the different loops to intersect (or stack) with each other, a wide range of different path lengths can be created, all of which offer the ability to move continuously through the park without the need for back tracking, and which cater for a wide range of fitness levels, experience and time availability. At Woowookarung, the intersection of the three primary loops creates a full circuit which circumnavigates the park at a total length over 15 kilometres. This provides a significant walk (approx 4 hrs) or an hour long ride by bike.

Shared Paths or Single Use Paths?
There has been considerable discussion during the development of the Park Plan regarding the extent of pathways within the park, and whether or not they should be shared or single use. Given the proximity of the park to urban...
areas and the significant population growth projected for Ballarat in the coming decades, it is appropriate that pathways within the park are designated shared use, with the exception of a number of speciality use pathways catering for particular uses where interactions between different users within the park an be carefully managed.

This approach is supported by research undertaken by the International Mountain Biking Association which states “some land managers believe separate trails will eliminate user conflict, with one trail for mountain bikers, one for hikers, and so on. Separating trail users is a commonplace strategy in recreational land management. The problem with this policy, however, is that responsible bike use is, in fact, compatible with most other types of trail use. When all visitors observe basic trail etiquette, their encounters with other users will be harmonious, and most people will have a satisfying experience on the trail.”

Importantly, it is this shared use trail etiquette that must supported and reinforced in the Park Plan. Trails should be shared use and available for different modes of use, including mountain biking. However, construction of extensive single use mountain biking trails within the park is considered incompatible with the development of the park, especially when managing the extent of trail intersections and safety within the park. Dedicated single use mountain bike facilities can be provided elsewhere within the region, such as at Creswick which has recently received significant State government funding for the construction of new bike trails.

Accessibility & Universal Access

Consideration has been given to the provision of universal access to key visitor nodes and sites throughout the park. While universal access to all primary and secondary loops and circuits will be unlikely due to the nature of the park’s topography, specialty all abilities access loops will be provided from key park visitor nodes that are designed to meet universal access guidelines, allowing people with mobility impairments to access the trail with consideration for gradients, no steps, and appropriate surfacing.

Minimising Fragmentation

The development of the trail network into primary, secondary and specialty loops, coupled with the rationalisation and closure of the unnecessary tracks (refer Idea 4A) reduces fragmentation by creating larger areas of undisturbed pockets within the park. This in turn helps to protect areas of sensitive or important ecologies within the park by allowing wider buffers to trails and park facilities. Wherever possible, the proposed trail network utilises existing track rather than construct new track to avoid unnecessary further disturbance.

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03 Refer to Parks Victoria Disability Action Plan 2017 - 2020
**Goal 5A - Provide Primary Loops & Circuits**

There are three primary loops within the park; the northern loop (7.28km), the central loop (7.46km) and the southern loop (4.37km). The primary loops provide an important navigation structure (or ‘backbone’) to the park, allowing access to existing and proposed park facilities, places of interest and experiences. Each loop can be accessed from a variety of different park entrances, as well as from each other, allowing many different opportunities to both access and move through the park.

Importantly, the primary loops and circuit paths are shared use paths that cater for a variety of modes of travel, including walking, running and bicycle riding. Consequently, these paths must be carefully designed to accommodate all users safely. This includes providing sufficient width to allow people to pass safely, avoiding tight and technical switchbacks and providing clear sight lines to avoid unexpected collisions.

It is likely that the primary loops and circuit paths will experience greater usage, and will therefore need to be designed accordingly. This higher usage (and greater disturbance) suggests these pathways should be located away from more environmentally sensitive locations within the park (including waterways, steep slopes susceptible to erosion and significant stands of grass trees).

Importantly, the proposed alignment of the Goldfields Track coincides with the alignment of the primary loops and circuits (refer to page 89 Example Loops and Circuits for the proposed alignment). The primary loops and circuits are:

**The Full Circuit Loop**

This primary loop circumnavigates the entire park, forming an important circulation spine through the Park. It intersects the three major park visitor nodes (the main park visitor centre, the southern biking node and the lookout node), providing a range of beginning and end points for the loop. The full circuit provides a longer 3-4 hour walk or a 1 hour ride for those looking for something more strenuous. Loop Length = 15.72km

**The Northern Loop**

This is a primary loop which sits within the northern section of the park, traversing through areas of largely intact forest, and numerous waterways, gullies and ridges. It is accessed from the lookout visitor nodes, as well as numerous neighbourhood park nodes. Loop Length = 7.28 km

**The Central Loop (The 10,000 Steps)**

The Central Loop also forms the 10,000 Steps loop, which connects many of the exciting features of the park. It traverses a wide range of topography, commencing at the Major Park Node (where there is a range of facilities including car parking and toilets), travelling uphill through areas of regenerating forest and intact forest blocks before reaching the Lookout. The path then returns downhill through the Lal Lal Drain, along side the Rifle Range and back to the Major Park Node. Loop Length = 7.535 km

**The Southern Loop**

This is a primary loop which traverses through large areas of regenerating forest (former plantation blocks), as well as isolated fragments of intact forest. It is accessed from the southern visitor nodes, as well as numerous neighbourhood park nodes. Loop Length = 4.37 km

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**Strategies**

1. Provide a network (backbone) of three primary loops and circuits through the park which structure access and movement.

2. Ensure the primary loops and circuits are accessible from key park entry points and adjacent suburbs.

3. Incorporate the proposed alignment of the Goldfields (Wallaby) Track into the design of the park. This represents an important opportunity.

4. Where possible, locate the primary loop on an existing trail (which can be upgraded if required). Avoid unnecessary construction of new trail. If new trail is required, ensure it is located in less environmentally sensitive areas.

5. Where primary loops and circuits traverse areas of ecological sensitivity (including waterways and steeper slopes), consider the use of raised bridges and boardwalks to elevate the pathway above the ground.

6. Where possible consolidate primary loops and circuits to existing tracks to avoid further disturbance to the ecologies of the park.
### Primary Loops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loop</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Walk</th>
<th>Ride</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Central Loop</td>
<td>7.46km</td>
<td>1.5-2 hrs</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Southern Loop</td>
<td>4.37km</td>
<td>1 hr 20 mins</td>
<td>20 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Northern Loop</td>
<td>7.28 km</td>
<td>1.5-2hrs</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Full Circuit</td>
<td>15.66 km</td>
<td>3-4 hrs</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average walking speed 4kph, average riding speed 15kph*
**Goal 5B - Provide Secondary Loops & Circuits**

Unlike the primary loops which provide an overall structure to the park, the secondary loops and circuits are shorter paths which provide access to a range of park features and experiences. Typically the secondary loops and circuits are ‘stacked’ off the primary path network, allowing a great diversity of trail lengths and configurations. Many of the secondary loops and circuits are directly connected to local neighbourhood park entry points, allowing residents from adjacent communities to access the park.

The rationalisation of the trail network, particularly of secondary loops and circuits, creates larger areas of undisturbed land within the park, which in turn helps protect areas of sensitive or important ecologies by allowing wider buffers to trails and park facilities (where disturbance from people is much higher). Types of secondary loops and circuits include -

**Lal Lal Drain Waterway Loop**

This is a secondary loop which provides a fascinating short walk from the Lookout Visitor Node, down through the Lal Lal Drain waterway, which is undergoing significant revegetation and reconstruction and back up to the Lookout. It traverses both intact and regenerating sections of forest, traversing a range of topography with some steep sections.

**Saw Pit Gully Chain Of Ponds Loop**

This is a secondary loop which provides access to some of the most interesting and dramatic gold mining relics within the park, including dams and diggings. This walk offers an opportunity to understand how the park has been affected by human activities since the arrival of non-indigenous Australians. It also traverses some of the more significant waterways within the park, providing opportunities to observe the regeneration of creeks and waterways within the park.

**The Cascades Gorge Loop**

This is a secondary loop which provides access to one of the park’s most dramatic features known locally as the Gorge and the Cascades, which in winter time is the closest waterway to Ballarat. The loop traverses some of the steepest topography within the park, and will require bridges and boardwalks to cross the sensitive waterway. This loop will require significant rehabilitation of the existing water easement (managed by Central Highlands Water) where there is extensive erosion and damage caused by illegal vehicle access. This loop also provides a connection for the Goldfields Track through the park to the south.

**Wildflower Loop**

This is a secondary loop which allows access to sites within the park with excellent displays of wildflowers.

**Cultural Heritage Discovery Loops**

An important component of Celebrating the Culture (Idea 01) is the telling the many different stories of the park. There is an exciting opportunity to create a range of secondary loops and circuits which explore aspects of the important cultural heritage of Woowookarung, including both indigenous and immigration stories.

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**Strategies**

1. **Provide a network of shorter secondary loops and circuits which provide access to a key park features, destinations and experiences.**

2. **Ensure secondary loops and circuits are accessed either from the primary loop, or from neighbourhood nodes.**

3. **Rationalise secondary loops and circuits to create larger areas of undisturbed land within the park, which helps protect areas of sensitive or important ecologies by allowing wider buffers to trails and park facilities (where disturbance from people is much higher).**

4. **Develop a range of secondary loops which explore important aspects for the Park’s cultural heritage, history and stories.**
**Secondary Loops**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Walk</th>
<th>Ride</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7.46km</td>
<td>1.5-2 hrs</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4.37km</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>20 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>7.28 km</td>
<td>1.5-2hrs</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average walking speed 4kph, average riding speed 15kph*
**Goal 5C - Provide Specialty Loops & Circuits**

There are a range of uses which require specialty loops and circuits. Typically these loops and circuits cater for activities which may be incompatible or problematic with other uses and therefore require physical separation (such as higher speed technical mountain biking), or require specific management due to the nature of their impact (such as horse trail riding). Often these activities have a greater impact (footprint) on the environment or require trail construction that is suitable to the level of impact, and therefore need to be located in areas of the park that are robust and can sustain this use. There are two primary types of specialty loops and circuits.

**Mountain Biking Loops**

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the popularity of mountain biking and during the development of the Park Plan, there has been requests for the inclusion of dedicated mountain biking facilities within the park. While the majority of trails within the park are shared use, there are a number of single use MB trails located in the south of the park. These trails have been located in areas of the park where there is greater disturbance and where the impacts of the construction of best practice MB trails can be carefully managed. These trails are also located to minimise the intersection with other shared use primary and secondary loops, thereby avoiding potential use conflicts.

Speciality MB Loop Length = 9.26 km

**Trail Horse Riding Loops**

Horse riding has historically occurred in the park, in part due to the proximity to equestrian facilities located on the eastern side of the park. The Park Plan supports the inclusion of this activity where it can be appropriately managed without damage to the ecology of the park and where use conflicts can be avoided. For this reason, horse riding loops exclude incompatible uses such as mountain biking and bicycle riding. All horse riding loops are located on existing trail or management roads. The provision of adequate and safe parking of horse floats and vehicles can be provided on Clayton Street (near Foos Lane) on the eastern side of the park. Consideration should be given to additional parking at the end of Richards Street on the western side in the future.

Speciality Horse Loop Length = 5.75 km

**Introduction to the Forest Walk (All Abilities Access)**

This is a single use specialty loop providing a short all abilities walking trail into the forest. It is accessed from the Main park Visitor Node where there are a range of facilities, including car parking and toilets. The purpose of this trail is to provide an introduction to the forest experience for those people unfamiliar with walking within the forest. It is also designed to provide all abilities access with consideration for gradients, no steps, and appropriate surfacing. It is constructed to meet universal access guidelines, allowing people with mobility impairments to access the trail.

Speciality walking Loop Length = 530 metres

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**Strategies**

1. Provide a range of specialty loops and circuits that cater for activities which may be incompatible with shared use paths, such as technical, high speed mountain biking, horse (trail) riding and all access walking.

2. Provide horse access into the park from Foos Lane.

3. Provide a range of faster single use mountain biking loops and circuits within the park that protect areas of higher ecological significance.

4. Ensure the construction and maintenance of single use mountain biking tracks do not pose ongoing risks to the parks ecology.

5. Locate high intensity activities on areas that will sustain their impacts.
### Speciality Loops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speciality Loops</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Existing Trail</th>
<th>New Trail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Mountain Biking Loops</td>
<td>9.26 km</td>
<td>0 km</td>
<td>9.26 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Trail Riding Loops</td>
<td>5.75 km</td>
<td>5.75 km</td>
<td>0 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C All Abilities Access Walk</td>
<td>0.53 km</td>
<td>0.53 km</td>
<td>0 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend**
- Primary Visitor Site
- Pax Hill Scout Camp
- Primary Loop & Circuit

**Scale:**
- 0
- 0.25
- 0.5
- 1 KM

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*Eight Strategic Directions | 87*
Legend - Loops & Circuits

- **Primary Loops & Circuits**
- **Secondary Loops & Circuits**
- **Speciality Loops & Circuits**

- **Primary Visitor Site**
- **Pax Hill Scout Camp**

0 0.25 0.5 1.25KM
Example Loops & Circuits

The following are some of the many different loops and circuits that can be undertaken in Woowookarung Regional Park. The design of the trail network provides great flexibility for many different loops and circuits, while significantly reducing the overall trail length.

Example 01 - The 10,000 Steps (Central Loop)
The Central Loop also forms the 10,000 Steps loop, which connects many of the exciting features of the park. It traverses a wide range of topography, commencing at the Major Park Node (where there is a range of facilities including car parking and toilets), travelling uphill through areas of regenerating forest and intact forest blocks before reaching the Lookout. The path then returns downhill through the Lal Lal Drain, along side the Rifle Range and back to the Major Park Node.

Loop Length = 7.535 km

Example 02 - Local Neighbourhood Loop
Local residents living within walking distances to the Park will undertake regular loops and circuits close to where they live. This may be for dog walking, evening strolls, jogging or recreational riding. They will access the Park from the closest Neighbourhood Park Nodes. These loops will typically be undertaken more frequently and are shorter in duration. Local neighbourhood loops are primarily located occur along the western park edge adjacent to suburban development.

Loop Length = 2 - 4 km typ.

Example 03 - Introduction to the Forest Walk (All Abilities Access)
This is a single use specialty loop providing a short all abilities walking trail into the forest. It is accessed from the Main park Visitor Node where there are a range of facilities, including car parking and toilets. The purpose of this trail is to provide an introduction to the forest experience for those people unfamiliar with walking within the forest. It is also designed to provide all abilities access with consideration for gradients, no steps, and appropriate surfacing.

Loop Length = 530 metres

Example 04 - Lal Lal Drain and Lookout Nature Loop
This is a secondary loop which provides a fascinating short walk from the Lookout Visitor Node, down through the Lal Lal Drain waterway, which is undergoing significant revegetation and reconstruction and back up to the Lookout. It traverses both intact and regenerating sections of forest, traversing a range of topography with some steep sections.

Loop Length = 2.05 km
Example 03 - Mountain Biking Loop

This is a single-use specialty loop catering for mountain biking. The trail is more technical in nature, with a range of trail features designed to enhance the mountain biking experience. The loop is located in a section of regenerating forest that is more highly disturbed, providing an opportunity for the MB community and clubs to participate within the regeneration of this block. The loop can be accessed from primary and secondary shared use trails, or by the Southern Primary Park Node where there is a car park and bike wash down facilities. This loop forms part of a series of specialty MB loops.

Loop Length = 2.97 km

Example 04 - Circumnavigating the Park Loop (Full Circuit)

Although the park is a little over 5 km in length (north to south), there is an opportunity to create a shared use loop that circumnavigates the entire park, providing a longer 3-4 hour walk or a 1 hour ride for those looking for something more strenuous. Also known as the Full Circuit, this follows the primary park loop which forms the backbone (or spine) to the park. It intersects the three Major Park Nodes (the main park visitor centre, the southern biking node and the lookout node), providing a range of beginning and end points for the loop.

Loop Length = 15.72 km

Example 07 - Sawpit Gully Chain of Ponds Loop

This is a secondary loop which provides access to some of the most interesting and dramatic gold mining relics within the park, including dams and diggings. This walk offers an opportunity to understand how the park has been affected by human activities since the arrival of non-indigenous Australians. It also traverses some of the more significant waterways within the park, providing opportunities to observe the regeneration of creeks and waterways within the park.

Loop Length = 2.35 km

Example 08 - Walking the Goldfields Track

The Goldfields Track is a 210 km shared-use trail that stretches from Mount Buninyong (just south of Ballarat) to Bendigo in the north. The Goldfields Track traverses through the park, utilising a portion of the Full Circuit primary shared use loop.

Loop Length = 6.03 km (within the park)
Throughout Woowookarung Regional Park are a range of destinations and locations that require the provision of certain facilities that support the user activities and experiences. These visitor sites are connected by the loops and circuits which, together, form an integral component to how people will experience and navigate through the park.

What Is A Visitor Site?
A successful park requires facilities that support a diverse range activities and experiences. A visitor site is a designated specific area where there is an invitation to stop and undertake some form of activity. The extent of a visitor site is the cleared or actively managed area that may contain visitor facilities and/or the delivery of visitor services that contribute to the visitor experience.

At Woowookarung, there are a range of proposed visitor sites that support a wide range of activities and experiences, as well as provide important facilities for visitors. There are three types of forest visitor sites proposed:

Primary Forest Visitor Sites
These are larger park visitor sites which become important locations where people can access the park. Primary sites may include picnic grounds, information hubs, car parking, toilets and shelters. These sites are typically arrival or destination sites (particularly for people from further afield arriving by car) and consequently will experience higher levels of visitation.

Secondary Forest Visitor Sites
These are important locations within the park that support particular activities and experiences, such as viewing platforms, picnic tables, bridges, interpretative displays, lookout clearings (which allow views out of the park from elevated positions) and night sky clearings (which provide framed views of the night sky with minimal light disturbance). Secondary visitor sites are typically located on the primary and secondary loops and circuits and are experiences as part of the journey travelling through the park either on foot or by bicycle.

Neighbourhood Forest Trailheads
These are smaller neighbourhood park entry points located on the edge of the park adjacent to residential areas that provide trailheads that connect to the primary and secondary loops and circuits.

Level of Service
The identification of the Level of Service (LOS) of each site is a key component of Parks Victoria’s Visitor Experience Framework. The LOS is based on the type and extent of facilities and services that are proposed at each site within the park. Each site will have its own LOS which will enable settings, access, I&E and visitor facilities to be assessed against five levels of service: Very Basic, Basic, Mid, High and Very High, depending on the anticipated usage.
Designing the Visitor Site

Because the visitor sites welcome people into the park, it is very important that the design of these facilities and infrastructure reflect the ideas, experiences and stories that contribute to the character of Woowookarung. It is important that the park has its own unique character that is different to what can be experienced elsewhere. This becomes an important part of the experience of Woowookarung and can help build longer term connections between people and the park. There is an important opportunity to develop a suite of high quality and unique design details for the full range of elements to be located within the park. The design language may reflect the following themes -

Wadawarrung Cultural Heritage

The design of the visitor sites within the park should draw inspiration from the strong and enduring connections between the traditional owners and the land in which the park sits.

Goldmining

During the gold rush, the Canadian Forest would have been a hive of activity, and while much of the forest was spared the highly destructive gold mining activities experienced close by, it still had a wide range of interesting structure and interventions. These gold mining structures provide a wealth of inspiration that may inform the design of lookouts, bridges, boardwalks and other structures.

Forestry

The history of Woowookarung as both a natural forest (the ‘bush’) and an artificial forest (the plantation), strongly suggests the use of timber as an appropriate material for the construction of many details. There is an interesting opportunity to harvest suitable timber from the park for use in the construction of these elements. Such timber may become available after wind storms and other events, or through the required thinning or removal of trees for safety reasons. This also reinforces Woowookarung as the ‘place of plenty’, providing important resources to the community throughout its long history.
Goal 6A - Create Primary Forest Visitor Sites

Primary Forest Visitor Sites are larger park visitor sites which become important locations where people can access the park. Primary sites may include picnic grounds, information hubs, car parking, toilets and shelters. These sites are typically arrival or destination sites (particularly for people from further afield arriving by car) and consequently will experience higher levels of visitation. Primary visitor sites are located on the primary loops and circuits, allowing ease of access throughout the park via the trail network.

Because primary visitor sites have a larger footprint due to the more intensive range of facilities, they are typically located within the former plantation blocks were disturbance to the landscape is already high and regeneration is often hampered by weed invasion. This ensures that existing areas of more intact forest are not disturbed. Furthermore, there is an exemption on off-set planting requirements in areas of former plantation that were felled in 2012, making these locations more attractive to locate park facilities.

Primary visitor sites may also need to be located in larger clearings which allow a defensible space around the facilities to better protect park assets during bush fires. This defensible space can become an important design feature in these locations, providing a range of opportunities, such as larger mown areas of grass.

Primary Forest Visitor Site A (Western) - Health, Community & All-Abilities

This is the main park visitor site where people who are travelling by car will access the park. Vehicle access is available from Geelong Road, via Elsworth Street and Katy Ryan's Road. The site is centrally located within the park, providing excellent access to the primary loops and circuits from the Central Loop. This visitor site will provide an important introduction to Woowookarung Regional Park and for many people will become the main entry point into the park.

The western primary forest visitor site will contain a wide range of facilities and activities including visitor information (incl. maps), toilets, shelters and canopies for rain and wind protection, nature based play opportunities, car parking, barbecues and seating / picnic tables for small and large gatherings, speciality walking paths (including the all abilities Introduction to the Forest Walk), garden beds and tree planting and areas of larger mown grass for activities. This visitor site will also become the location for a range of park activities and events with a focus on health, community and all abilities.

Primary Forest Visitor Site B (Southern) - Biking

This is a primary forest visitor site that provides support for people undertaking mountain biking within the park and proves direct access to a range of Speciality loops and circuits dedicated to this purpose. It will contain a range of facilities that support this activity, including visitor information, bike wash down facilities and carparking.

Primary Forest Visitor Site C (Eastern) - Lookout

This major park node provides an important singular destination for people in Ballarat to experience great views across the city and broader landscape. It has the potential to become a significant regional destination, providing a meeting and gathering place for people to celebrate important occasions, such as New Years Eve. This visitor site is accessible by car (via Boundary Road), allowing people to experience the great views who may otherwise chose not to walk.

It is connected to the primary park walking loop and forms part of the 10,000 Steps (Central Loop), one of the key loops within the park. The lookout also offers a shorter nature walk through the regenerating forest and Lal Lal ‘Drain’ waterway (Lal Lal Drain and Lookout Nature Loop). This visitor site will contain a range of facilities including visitor information, a lookout structure that provides elevated western views over Ballarat, car parking, toilets, gathering spaces, barbecues, seating and shelters. As the forest regenerates down the hill to the west it will be important to manage the vegetation to retain the viewsheds to Ballarat.

Pax Hill Scout Camp

The Pax Hill Scout Camp provides accommodation and outdoor activity programmes for a range of groups including scouts, schools, families and private organisations. While the Scout Camp itself sits on privately owned land adjacent to the park (and is not managed by Parks Victoria), it does offer an important set of experiences that can enhance the park. It is the only place where you can stay overnight within the forest, and thus, provides an expanded range of activities.
Strategies

1. Provide a variety of visitor sites with associated visitor facilities within areas of former plantation blocks where disturbance to the landscape is high.

2. Construct park facilities to the highest environmental sustainability standard, including exploring of bio flushing toilets, materials with low embodied energy and recycled materials.

3. Work collaboratively with the managers of the Pax Hill Scout Camp to develop Pax Hill as an important privately run area which can offer a wide range of complimentary experiences and services that will support the function of the park.

Primary Forest Visitor Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary Visitor Site</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>New</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Park Visitor Centre</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Biking Node</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Lookout</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>School &amp; Scouts (Pax Hill)</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend

Primary Loops & Circuits
Secondary Loops & Circuits
Primary Visitor Site
Pax Hill Scout Camp

Eight Strategic Directions | 97
**Goal 6B - Create Secondary Forest Visitor Sites**

These are important locations within the park that support particular activities and unique experiences, such as viewing platforms, picnic tables, bridges, interpretative displays, lookout clearings (which allow views out of the park from elevated positions) and night sky clearings (which provide framed views of the night sky with minimal light disturbance). Secondary visitor sites are typically located on the primary and secondary loops and circuits and are experiences as part of the journey of travelling through the park either on foot or by bicycle. In this sense, these secondary forest visitor sites tend to be destinations or mid way points in a journey, rather than entry points into the park.

**Lal Lal Drain Waterway**

The site offers great potential to explore the rehabilitation of one of the most important creeks within the park, which has been significantly disturbed and damaged by the creation, management and removal of the plantations. The creek is currently highly weed infested and eroded - there is an exciting story to be told in this location.

**Saw Pit Gully & Dam**

This site is rich with traces of gold mining activities due to the location at the confluence of a number of creeks and waterways. This site offers enormous potential for the restoration and rehabilitation of these waterways.

**The Amphitheatre**

Located on the 10,000 Steps (Central Loop), the Amphitheatre (as named by the Friends of the Canadian Corridor) sits within the topography of the park overlooking Ballarat. There is an opportunity to provide lookout platforms, picnic tables and seating that provide views across the regenerating former plantation blocks. This location may provide an opportunity to tell the important story of the forest's regeneration and strategies to reunite the forest fragments (such as the ecological corridors). Other stories to tell include the water races (on the nearby hillside). While there is no camping within the park, there is an opportunity for the raised platforms to provide tent platforms for overnight adventures run by the Pax Hill Scout Camp, providing children with an important introduction to the forest and camping.

**The Gorge & Cascades**

The Gorge is one of the park's most dramatic features and includes the Cascades, which in winter time is the closest waterfall to Ballarat. This area of the park has some of the steepest topography within the park, and will require bridges and boardwalks to cross the sensitive waterway offering a range of exciting visitor experiences.

**The Tank Canvas**

There is an opportunity to utilise the Central Highlands Water water tanks as a large canvas which can contain a mural depicting Wadawurrung connections to the park. This takes its inspiration from other well known mural projects, most notably Yarrambiack's painted disused silos by internationally renowned street artist Adnate.

**The Hills / Grasstree Gully**

Within the park there are a number of outstanding clusters of grass trees which are one of the most iconic features of the park. These areas are particularly sensitive due to the threat posed by cinnamon fungus. Consequently, there is opportunity to create a raised boardwalk through this landscape that offers an exciting experience of the grasstrees.

**Night Sky Clearing**

According to the Friends of the Canadian Corridor (FoCC), astronomers have been one of the staunchest groups supporting the formation of the Park from the start in large part due to the exciting opportunity to observe the night sky without the intrusion of light pollution. The large area of the Park contributes to the level of darkness of our southern sky. Night sky clearings allow the opportunity to observe the night sky. These clearings are best located within the former plantation blocks where revegetation is poor, allowing for the maintenance of a clearing within the surrounding regenerating forest.

**Forest Bathing**

In recent years there has been a growth in interest in forest bathing, which is the practice that combines a range of predefined, guided exercises and tasks in an outdoor environment, typically a forested area.

**Strategies**

1. Provide a range of activity and experience nodes throughout the park.
2. Allows views of the forest, allow the forest to be seen, to be framed (about seeing the forest for the trees)
### Secondary Forest Visitor Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Lal Lal 'Drain' Waterway Boardwalk and waterway crossings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The Dam Dam lip repair and walkway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Saw Pit Gully Raised boardwalk and waterway crossings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Grassland Gathering space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>The Amphitheatre Decks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>The Gorge &amp; Cascades Bridge crossing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>The Tank Canvas Artwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>The Hills / Grasstree Gully Raised boardwalk through forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Night Sky Clearing Forest clearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Forest Bathing Contemplative forest clearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Picnic Ground With car access from Boundary Road</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Legend**

- **Primary Loops & Circuits**
- **Secondary Loops & Circuits**
- **Secondary Visitor Site**

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Eight Strategic Directions | 101
Goal 6C - Provide Neighbourhood Forest Trailheads
These are smaller neighbourhood park entry points located on the edge of the park adjacent to residential areas that provide trailheads that connect to the primary and secondary loops and circuits. They provide convenient park entry points for people walking or cycling to the park from adjacent residential areas. This caters for people taking a daily stroll, walking the dog or going for a jog after work and consequently, this usage tends to be more regular throughout the week and year, as well as shorter in duration (<1 hour).

In the last year since new park signage has been installed, Parks Victoria have noticed an increase in neighbourhood usage of the park, particular from people who walk their dogs. This confirms an important role that visible park signage, park entry nodes and trailheads can play in directly influencing positive park behaviours.

Neighbourhood forest trailheads should be carefully located to provide the most convenient access for the broadest number of people from the adjacent residential areas. Typically, neighbourhood park nodes should be located at existing trailheads and ideally be spaced approximately every 400 metres to facilitate convenient access. Most will be located along the western edge of the park adjacent to the expanding suburbs of Canadian and Mount Clear.

Neighbourhood forest trailheads will typically include limited facilities such as park signage and information. In some locations, limited car parking will be provided (for those who may drive from further afield). Fencing may also be required in some locations to prevent unauthorised vehicle access along trails.

Strategies
1. Provide neighbourhood forest trailheads at key park entry locations.
2. Provide direct linkages to both the primary and secondary path network, allowing a wide range of loops and circuits.
3. Provide park signage at neighbourhood forest trailheads.
4. Implement fencing in key locations to prevent unauthorised vehicle access along trails.
Neighbourhood Forest Trailhead
(with 400 metre diameter)

Legend

Primary Loops & Circuits
Secondary Loops & Circuits

Neighbourhood Forest Trailhead (with 400 metre diameter)
Legend - Forest Visitor Sites

- Primary Loops & Circuits
- Secondary Loops & Circuits
- Speciality Loops & Circuits

- Primary Visitor Site
- Pax Hill Scouts Camp
- Secondary Visitor Site
- Neighbourhood Trailhead (with 400m diameter)
The success of the park will be dependant on the creation of excellent physical connections between Woowookarung Regional Park and the surrounding suburbs of Ballarat. The Park is the largest park within Ballarat, and along with Lake Wendouree and Victoria Park, forms part of a significant trifecta of large, important parks orbiting the city.

The Lake, the Park and the Forest

In considering Lake Wendouree, Victoria Park and Woowookarung, there is a fascinating relationship between foreground and background, between openness and enclosure and between lake, park and forest. There is an exciting opportunity to refocus Ballarat around three satellites rather than two, and to create a new and prominent identity for Woowookarung as a significant park for the city.

The lake, the park and the forest have always played an important historic role for the Wadawurrung. Lake Wendouree was originally a shallow reedy swamp set on a rich alluvial flat teaming with wildlife including kangaroos, emus, wombats, dingos and a wide variety of cockatoos and parrots. The nomadic Wadawurrung people from the Kulin tribe camped by the swamp during summer months.01

Lake Wendouree

Unlike the forest, Lake Wendouree has always been in the foreground of the city, an important playground for Ballarat since the 1850’s when the swamp was dammed and the lake was created. The lake has been a prominent social and recreational asset for the city and is used extensively by the people of Ballarat.

“Boating has long been an important sport and leisure activity on the lake and for many years local schools have held the “Head of the Lake” rowing regatta there. The track around the lake provides an interesting 6 km challenge to walking, cycling and running enthusiasts who complete the circuit in their thousands each week, irrespective of the weather.”02

Victoria Park

Victoria Park “consists of 130 hectares of open active and passive recreation parkland and is enclosed by Gillies, Sturt, Russell and Winter Streets. The site was initially planted on 23 May 1890 with more than 700 trees by the citizens of Ballarat in celebration of Victoria’s first Arbor Day. The trees (Oaks, Elms, Planes and Cedars) were planted in grand avenues and promenades together with selected clump plantings. Victoria Park contains significant indigenous grassland sites. The remnant flora has been preserved largely due to the absence of grazing or frequent mowing.”03 The park is an interesting amalgam of manicured nature and wild grassland.

References:
02 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Wendouree
Goal 7A - Establish Connections To The Park

Although the forest has always been present in the background of Ballarat and has played an important role in the history of the city, it has remained largely invisible to many people. Strategies that bring the park to the foreground are crucial to developing a strong sense of ownership and pride amongst the community and ensuring the on going success of the park.

The success of Woowookarung Regional Park in becoming one of Ballarat’s three significant parks will in large part rest with the ability to create excellent physical connections with the surrounding suburbs and to make the park more visible. These connections will encourage walking and cycling to the park, which sits very close to the centre of the city. Because most of these opportunities lie outside the park, there is an important role in working closely with the City of Ballarat to explore and resolve these connections.

Canadian Creek Shared Pathway

The most important opportunity to connect the park with the creek is via the Canadian Creek and the future extension of the shared user path network from the creek into the park. The Canadian Creek corridor forms an important linear park connecting the suburbs with the city. The path network currently terminates at Olympic Avenue.

Olympic Avenue

This forms one of the most direct connections from the creek to the park, as well as linking Damascus College, Mount Clear College and the Earth Ed Centre. There is an opportunity for the City of Ballarat to explore ways to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity along the street to improve connections. Consideration should be given to dedicated off street bicycle paths or segregated cycle tracks.

Goldfields Track Alignment

The Goldfields track is a 210 kilometre shared use trail that stretches from Mount Buninyong (just south of Ballarat) to Bendigo in the north. The current alignment of the Goldfields Track traverses through the streets of Canadian before entering the park along the north western edge (at Spencer Street).

Neighbourhood Forest Trailheads

These form very important local park entry points and play an important role in connecting the park into the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Strategies

1. Work with the City of Ballarat to upgrade the shared user path along Canadian Creek to provide improved access to the park. Improvements to these paths are critical to the future success of the park.
2. Work with the City of Ballarat to provide linkages between Canadian Creek and Woowookarung to allow significantly improved access to the park.
3. Work with the City of Ballarat to explore the relationship between Lake Wendouree, Victoria Park and Woowookarung as the three crucial parks on opposite sides of the city which orbit the city centre. There is an important opportunity to connect these three distinct recreation spaces.
4. Work with the City of Ballarat to integrate the Goldfields Track into the design of the park, allowing connections to the broader landscape.
5. Work with the City of Ballarat to upgrade pedestrian and bicycle connections along roadways linking the park and creek.
6. Provide high quality, clear and well positioned park entry signage that makes the park more visible within the community.
7. Provide directional signage and distance markers from adjacent main roads, Canadian Creek shared user pathway and from the City Centre to highlight the proximity and ease of access.
8. Provide clear trail signage and maps that highlight the different path loops and circuits. The rationalisation of the path network into primary, secondary and specialty loops and circuits provides a wonderful diversity of path lengths and experiences.
9. Provide regular marketing that will make the community aware of events and activities occurring within the park.
10. Advertise the park more broadly to encourage day trips from Melbourne and other locations outside of Ballarat.
**Goal 7B - Establish Ecological Corridors Between Park & Creek**

Ecological corridors along waterways play a vital role in supporting biodiversity, the operation of natural system and the movement of flora and fauna within the city and region, particularly as riparian zones are considered ‘hotspots’ for biodiversity. "A wildlife corridor is a way of connecting fragmented habitats. The corridor allows movement between isolated patches of habitat without other disturbances such as traffic or development. Wildlife corridors may be natural or artificial. Natural corridors are usually thin strips or a series of small clumps of high-quality habitat that connect the isolated patches. For example, birds often use waterways as migration routes because they provide valuable habitat and resources.”

Creek corridors offer the best opportunities for wildlife corridors as they provide critical resources for native fauna in a dry country. Native fauna are both resident in riparian corridors, and many other species from elsewhere within the landscape use waterways for occasional use and in droughts as a refuge. An important method to improve the ecological connectivity between the park and adjacent ecologies is to improve linkages between the park and the Canadian Creek corridor.

The park is currently not well connected to the Canadian Creek corridor and shared user trail network. A corridor retaining and enhancing the ecological connectivity between the park and Canadian Creek would increase the resilience of fauna moving through this more developed landscape.


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**Northern Ecological Corridor**

The northern park-creek connection corridor falls largely within land currently zoned industrial within the Municipal Planning Scheme. This block is characterised by large areas of undeveloped land. An important waterway and series of ponds extends through this land before joining Canadian Creek, providing an important corridor for biodiversity. As the City of Ballarat continues to grow, there will be increasing pressure to re-zone and redevelop this land for housing. Great consideration should be given to protecting and enhancing the ecological corridor that physically connects the Park with the creek.

**Southern Ecological Corridor**

The southern park-creek connection provides a largely forested and undeveloped connection between the park and the creek, which provides an important corridor for the movement of wildlife. This corridor provides the closest connection between park and creek with only 400 metres separation. Consequently, this provides one of the best opportunities to physically connect the creek and the Park.
Strategies

1. Work with the City of Ballarat to explore mechanisms that allow improved connections between the park and the Canadian Creek and shared user path.

2. Work with the City of Ballarat to ensure the Municipal Planning Scheme supports the long term creation of connections between the park and surrounding suburbs.

3. Develop ‘tenure blind’ park management strategies that align the management techniques of different land managers and owners and help create improved connections between the park and the creek.
Goal 7C - Manage The Park Interface

The interface between the suburbs and the park is important to resolve. This interface has more in common with an urban park, where residential development immediately abuts the parkland, leading to a variety of edge effects and disruption. In many cases, new housing backs onto the park (rather than fronts), leading to awkward interfaces. It will be important to work closely with both the City of Ballarat and Moorabool City Council to resolve the park interface.

Strategies

1. **Provide Neighbourhood Park Entrances** along the western interface between the park and adjacent suburbs. These local park entries should be located on average a maximum of 400m from each other, allowing convenient access into the park.

2. **Work with Council** to ensure future development adjacent to the park engages more directly and positively with the park.

3. **Develop 'cross tenure' bushfire management plans and strategies** that manage the interface between park and housing in a manner consistent with the park management objectives.

4. **Work with Council** to ensure that suitable overlays are consulted and implemented that better protect the surrounding ecologies to sustain/fortify their robustness so that the park can better cope with the resulting edge affects.

5. **Work with Council to review the Koala Management Plan** and draw reference to the corridor opportunities the park generates.

6. **Work with the Council on the land use planning schemes** that relate to the Eastern Ballarat Precinct and the Buninyong/MT Clear corridor.

7. **Work with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA)** to ensure water management is protected when development plans are at referral to ensure best value is maintained and storm water managed;

8. **Work with Council to consider the park land is changed from FMZ to appropriate conservation zone in the future.**

9. **Work in partnership with key neighbours** such as Pax Hill Scout Camp and Mt Clear SC/Earth Ed Centre to allow mutual benefits of visitor and community experiences as they interact with the park.

**Legend**

- Intact Forest Blocks
- Public Open Space (PPRZ) Council Managed
- Ecological Corridor
- Pathway Connection Opportunities
- Neighbourhood Trailhead (with 400m diameter)
STRATEGIC DIRECTION 08 - CONNECT PEOPLE AND THE PARK

A key component of the park plan is bringing Woowookarung to the foreground of Ballarat and making the park valued and relevant. The ongoing success of the park is reliant on making strong and enduring connections between people and the park and encouraging a strong sense of ownership and pride in the park.

Goal 8A – Activate Health Partnerships

Healthy Parks Healthy People is the foundation of Parks Victoria’s approach to park management, recognising the critical connection between nature and the physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellbeing benefits that parks provide individuals and communities.

Strategies

1. Build cross sector partnerships with the conservation, health, community, education and tourism sectors
2. Facilitate and enable community activation programs in the park to benefit healthier ecosystems and healthier communities
3. Design and manage park experiences and infrastructure to offer diverse and inclusive opportunities for people to improve their health and wellbeing in nature
4. Work with researchers and Traditional Owners to further strengthen the knowledge and evidence for the health benefits of parks and nature
5. Grow awareness of the benefits of healthy parks for people’s wellbeing and promote the benefits of time in nature for all.
**Goal 8B - Support Events And Services In The Park**

Work in partnership to support and develop organised events and activities scheduled over the day, week and year that generate ongoing interest and connection with the park. These help establish ongoing connections between people and place, creating a sense of ownership amongst the broader community. Events may include wildflower walks, wellness walks, yoga, health sessions, night time star gazing, demonstration burns, community bio blitz, school trips amongst many others.

In addition to events, continue to support licensed tour operators and other service providers that can expand and diversify the visitor experiences and services.

**Strategies**

1. Implement a programme of regular events and activities within the park that help bring people to the park.
2. Allocate sufficient resources to undertake the development and management of diverse partnerships and management of these events.
3. Support and encourage licensed tour operators to provide additional guided activities in the park.
4. Investigate opportunities and interest in from the business sector in providing additional visitor services at the primary visitor site.

**Goal 8C - Foster Community Participation**

Woowookarung was borne out of the incredible efforts of the local community to advocate for the creation of the park. Now that the park has been created, it will be important to maintain and develop upon this wonderful legacy by involving a wide variety of community organisations, schools, groups and individuals within the development of the Park.

Within close proximity to the park are a number of primary, secondary and tertiary schools and universities. There is an important opportunity to work closely with these educational institutions to develop research and educational programmes that contribute to knowledge and caring for the Park.

**Strategies**

1. Continue to work closely with the Friends of the Canadian Corridor (FoCC), schools, universities, and other community groups.
2. Work closely with the Wadawurrung, the traditional owners of the land, to build cultural connections and understanding.
3. Develop a range of outreach programmes that actively involve community group participation in managing and caring for the park.
4. Build upon and share knowledge of the Park by working with community groups such as the Field Naturalists who have undertaken extensive monitoring of the park in the last decade.
The Lookout on New Years Eve 2020
Credits

Secondary Forest Visitor Sites - The Hills & Grasstree Gully
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Ballarat East Network www.ballarateast.net
Reveal Ballarat’s Past http://ballaratrevealed.com/locations

Media