



RE: Draft Land Management Strategy, Aspiration and Guiding Principles
Parks Victoria

Presented by The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian Chapter

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INTRODUCTION

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) is the peak body for the landscape architecture profession in Australia. Representing over 3500 members, we champion a landscape of liveability and quality design for our public realm, open spaces and communities, and greater environmental stewardship. Our membership covers a diverse range of professional and creative services including strategic planning, urban design, open space design and natural resource management, working across all levels of government and within the private sector.

AILA's Charter stresses that urban and rural landscapes contribute to the Australian quality of life and that the condition of the landscape influences the economic, social and environmental health of the nation.

Open space is the interface between nature and human settlement. Its good management is vital for both the land itself and the populations depending on it to stay healthy and prosperous in the long term.

AILA has developed a number of Position Statements relevant to open space and the *Land Management Strategy Draft Guiding Principles*. They can be read at <https://bit.ly/2Zc3cfb>

As a professional institute with special interest in our park estate, AILA is pleased to have the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Land Management Strategy Draft Guiding Principles*. The eight principles prepared by Parks Victoria comprehensively cover all aspects of open space land management, including science and knowledge, cultural and heritage values, and organisations as the land managers and community as the interactive public, which together shape our park estate.



Particularly, the actions taken to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and the willingness to learn from their traditional practice on the land, signifies a new era of land and parks management, which respects laws of nature and the thousands of years of wisdom dealing with natural landscapes that has been accumulated in the Aboriginal community.

We wish to offer below feedback for Parks Victoria's consideration.

While the eight principles are solid and highly commendable, we wish to highlight some inter-relationships between some of them and advocate for strengthening the integration of principles in the next phase of development of the *Land Management Strategy*.

Comments on the following principles:

- 1. Maintain and strengthen the parks estate; and**
- 2. Prepare for the future**

It is appropriate that these two guiding principles are considered first in the strategy, not only for their importance individually but also because they are delicately intertwined and mutually influence aspects of our reserves. Parks and open spaces need to be understood for their unique identity and function as well as the physical context and timescape within which they are knitted.

As a consequence of Victoria's rapid growth, ever more suburbs are being built, with accompanying infrastructure such as roads. Satellite cities are growing, with encouragement to relieve expansionary pressures on Melbourne and offer diverse lifestyles. AILA is concerned about what this means for our green spaces, and moreover, what does this mean for the wildlife they are supporting.

Take the Point Cook Coastal Park in Wyndham for example. While the boundary of the park is well fenced and protected, the park is facing receding shoreline due to sea level rise from the south and residential developments are coming from the north. This park in particular, supports native bird communities and provides critical landing areas for migratory birds. The physical border may seem to stay the same, but the buffer zone within that border will expand, thereby reducing the actual area available for wildlife.

To maintain intended functions of a reserve, a strategy must simultaneously look at the reserve's current spatial context, i.e. maintain and strengthen the park, and anticipate future challenges to that context, i.e. prepare for the future.

Recommendation: AILA recommends that the Strategy reference the interrelationship between these two principles. The importance of synchronising these first two principles cannot be overstated.

Comments on the following principles:

- 3. Connect with community,**
- 4. Use knowledge and evidence-based management, and**
- 6. Build partnerships**



These three principles will resonate with many practitioners. Balancing different perspectives, objectives and values for a design rationale, often without empirical evidence and knowledge of local context, is one of the biggest and most painstaking challenges designers can face.

Rather than trying to break down organisational silos and educating communities on a project-by-project basis, it would be far more effective to build a strong and supportive network to create a collaborative culture as the leaping pad for every project undertaken. Partnership with research institutes is paramount. Implementation of research outcomes in practice tends to be *ad hoc* rather than systematic. In addition, research conclusions are generally taken at face value, stripped from their context and applied without a thorough understanding of the background and underlying analysis.

The ongoing partnership with the community is another pillar of effective collaboration. If we are going to listen to the community and let them lead and own the changes taking place in our reserves, we need to equip them with true knowledge, be it scientific and ecological, social, behavioural or historic; the community needs and wants to make informed decisions. Education for practitioners, government officers and community members, systematically empowers us all to be confident with the decisions we make.

Recommendation: We highly commend the *Land Management Strategy Draft Guiding Principles* for identifying opportunities and actions that will help build bridges across the gaps we are currently facing and help Parks Victoria become a strong facilitator for effective collaboration of well informed and educated groups.

Summary

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this community engagement process and to offer our recommendations. AILA supports the draft aspiration and guiding principles whole heartedly and will be happy to clarify any statement and offer assistance to Parks Victoria if required.

For further information or to arrange a meeting with AILA, please contact Chapter Manager, Martha Delfas on 0422 404 224 or email vic@aila.org.au