

Joint International Congress Adelaide 2023

Sustainable Places Spaces, People and Habitats

THE ADELAIDE STATEMENT

Auspiced by World Urban Parks, Parks and Leisure Australia and Green Adelaide, the 2023 Joint International Congress assembled a diverse group of professionals, scholars, policymakers, and community leaders from across the globe. We, through this unique gathering, sought to foster meaningful collaborations, exchange knowledge, and explore ground-breaking ideas that will drive positive change in the interconnected realms of parks, leisure, and quality of the urban environment.

THE CHALLENGES

Cities are experiencing rising temperatures, more extreme weather events and changes in precipitation patterns. These climate shifts impact the ecological balance of urban ecosystems such as parks and alter their ability to provide the ecosystem services upon which cities depend. We must explore innovative and adaptive approaches to all aspects of park and leisure experience delivery to safeguard and improve living infrastructure (including green and blue spaces), while caring for the health of our communities.

The climate challenges are exacerbated by complex cultural, political, socio-economic, and environmental elements. Equitable access to parks and leisure experiences remains an ongoing concern. Addressing socio-economic disparities and recognising cultural differences are essential to creating inclusive communities where everyone can benefit from the physical, mental, economic, and social benefits provided by parks and leisure experiences.

- **Urban Expansion:** As cities grow, the demand for land increases, leading to the conversion of green spaces into urban developments, and incremental loss of parks and leisure spaces. This threatens the availability and accessibility of urban parks, particularly in densely populated areas, where green spaces are already limited. Sports fields are increasingly ‘hardened’ to cope with demands for use.



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- **Climate Change:** Our communities are facing the adverse impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures, extreme weather events and sea-level rise. Parks must adapt to these changes and contribute to climate resilience by providing cooling effects, mitigating floods and supporting biodiversity.
- **Social Inequities:** Access to quality parks and leisure experiences are not distributed evenly across communities. Low-income neighbourhoods and marginalised groups often lack access to well-maintained parks and leisure experiences exacerbating health and well-being disparities. These imbalances must be addressed to create inclusive spaces and achieve social equity.

CONGRESS OUTCOMES

Places and Built Facilities

Delegates explored the idea of making our urban spaces and leisure experiences more people oriented. Sustainable and universal design principles, accessibility, and the integration of technology discussions yielded strategies to create vibrant, functional spaces and experiences that cater to the diverse needs of communities.

Greener and Wilder

Delegates advocated for a "greener and wilder" approach to urban place development and a greater emphasis on nature-based solutions to our challenges. Discussion of successful examples from around the world highlighted the significance of supporting biodiversity, creating habitats for wildlife, and nurturing the health of ecosystems through the expansion, conservation, and sensitive design of green and blue spaces.

Sport and Active Recreation

Delegates recognised the crucial role of sport and active recreation in promoting physical activity and active lifestyles. Park, sport, active recreation, and leisure leaders' capacity to optimise parks, sport and active recreation programs and facilities contribute to communities' quality of life. The outcomes of this stream underscored the importance of fostering community engagement and providing diverse, equitable and inclusive opportunities for citizens to lead healthy and active lives.



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Culture and Perspective

Delegates reinforced the importance of First Peoples, and their understanding of the foundational importance of land, not only physically but also as part of the human psyche. Discussions in this stream delved into how parks and leisure experiences can celebrate diversity, and serve as spaces for creative expression, artistic endeavours and contribute to the unique identity of each community.

Innovation

Delegates identified the potential for innovative solutions to revolutionise park and leisure experience delivery by drawing on cutting-edge technologies, management practices and governance models. Innovation is a driving force behind positive change in the realm of parks, leisure experience and sustainability.

Health and Well-being

Delegates acknowledged the proven benefits of access to nature and leisure experiences on mental, physical, social and spiritual health and well-being. Discussions underscored the importance of integrating health considerations into park and leisure programs, planning and design. Various presenters emphasised the vital role of parks and leisure experiences as settings for fitness, relaxation, enjoyment, stress relief and improved overall health.

Leadership

Delegates discussed effective leadership and governance strategies that empower park and leisure managers, city officials and community leaders to champion park and leisure experience development. Strong and visionary leaders can better motivate, advocate, plan, design, and care for the needs of all who enjoy and benefit from leisure spaces and experiences.



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OUR PLEDGE:

We, the Delegates of the 2023 Joint International Congress, pledge to:

1. **Foster Collaboration:** We will actively seek partnerships and collaborations across disciplines, cultures, and sectors, recognising that addressing park and leisure challenges requires collective action.
2. **Promote Sustainability:** We will advocate for sustainable practices in park and leisure experience development and management, ensuring that our precious green and blue spaces grow and thrive. We emphasise the crucial role of parks in providing ecosystem services, such as air and water purification, carbon sequestration, and cooling of urban neighbourhoods, contributing to a sustainable urban environment.
3. **Advocate for Equity:** We will strive to create parks and leisure experiences that are accessible and welcoming to all, regardless of socio-economic status, race, gender, or ability.
4. **Embrace Innovation:** We will remain open to new ideas, technologies, and approaches that can transform park and leisure experience development, and enhance the health, well-being and liveability of communities.
5. **Champion Health and Well-being:** We will advocate for the integration of health and well-being considerations into park and leisure programs, planning and design, recognising the vital contribution that green and blue spaces, and leisure experiences play in improving communities' quality of life.
6. **Community Engagement:** We will support successful community engagement models and approaches that encourage stewardship of parks and leisure experiences by citizens, and facilitate individuals, communities and authorities working together. We know that engaging and empowering local communities is essential to creating meaningful and inclusive parks and leisure experiences.



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OUR COMMITMENT

Delegates are committed to drawing on the Adelaide Statement to guide and reinforce our strategic park and leisure initiatives. We recognise the importance of the learnings from this Congress and will share these learnings by using the Statement to inform our colleagues, our organisations, and our political representatives about the importance of parks and leisure experience delivery. Furthermore, World Urban Parks, Parks and Leisure Australia and Green Adelaide will promote the Adelaide Statement and evaluate the Statement's usage and impact to guide future developments.



World Urban Parks

A global organisation dedicated to promoting the importance of urban parks and green spaces.



Parks and Leisure Australia

The Australian national peak body that advocates for the development and management of parks and leisure facilities and programs.



Green Adelaide

A statutory landscape board of the Government of South Australia, creating a cooler, greener, wilder, and climate-resilient Adelaide.



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