



PARKS & LEISURE  
AUSTRALIA

**REGIONAL**  
**AWARDS OF**  
**EXCELLENCE**

**CRITERIA**  
**HANDBOOK**

# Parks & Leisure Australia

# AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

## ABOUT THE AWARDS

Each year, Parks and Leisure Australia acknowledges excellence in our industry through its prestigious Awards of Excellence.

The Awards of Excellence have been in existence for many years. These annual awards recognise and showcase the outstanding initiatives and innovative efforts of 'the people behind the places' which promote and enhance opportunities for the good use of leisure time for a number of social, environmental and economic benefits to the community.

The Parks and Leisure Australia Awards of Excellence submissions are online only. It is recommended that applications are prepared and saved in Microsoft Word (or another program) and copied and pasted into the online format. If you are submitting directly into the online system, save regularly as the system does not auto save. Videos are optional and a link or URL may be copied into the video field, it is preferred a video is provided if possible.

Nominees must be current members (corporate or individual) of Parks and Leisure Australia and are encouraged to attend the state and national awards presentations in the year in which they are nominated. If you wish to submit an entry but are not a current member, please contact the membership officer at [membership@parksleisure.com.au](mailto:membership@parksleisure.com.au).

The exact same projects cannot be entered into multiple categories, however if one large project has several components it may be split to enter more than one category. Please seek advice from National Office for more information. You cannot re-submit a project which has won at a regional or national level.

All projects/events/initiatives must have been completed or occurred and evaluated prior to the submission deadline and within the past 2 years.

A joint submission recognises more than one organisation that have contributed to a project /event/initiative. An example of a joint submission may be a Council and a consultant.

Joint submissions recognise key stakeholders and all organisations nominated must all be members of Parks and Leisure Australia. Additional stakeholders are unable to be added once nominations have

closed, so please consider this at the time of submitting the application. To check membership status, contact the membership officer at [membership@parksleisure.com.au](mailto:membership@parksleisure.com.au) or on 08 8332 0130.

When completing your submission, do not presume the judges have prior knowledge of your region. Take the time to write a well written entry - it can only be judged on what is submitted and will be judged on the success to which the project meets its objectives, the evaluation completed and its outcomes.

The nominations must address each of the criteria within the designated word limit and must be pertinent to the category for which it is being submitted.

It is useful to include information on your organisation's size, location, population, and operating budgets so the judging panel can put your submission into context with other applications.

You will be given the opportunity to provide up to three (3) files of supporting documentation/ photographs which must be uploaded to the submission (in PDF or JPEG formats and up to 15MB). Please only attach relevant documents.

All questions must be answered within the fields on the on-line submission form and not submitted as a separate uploaded document - any submitted in this manner will be deemed ineligible.

You will be requested to include a 50-word summary, organisation logo and a high-resolution jpeg image for promotional purposes which will be used throughout the promotion of the 2023 awards process.

If selected as a national finalist, you will be requested to submit a short video if you have not already done so.

National winners will be announced at the prestigious National Awards of Excellence Gala Dinner held in line with our National Conference each year.

## JUDGING

- Judging is conducted by a panel of experienced parks and leisure practitioners.
- Judges are asked to declare if a conflict of interest exists and if so, are excluded from the judging of that submission.
- Judges may not be familiar with your organisations size, location, population, and operating budget so, if appropriate, include this information in responses so judges can put applications into context.
- Awards are judged in accordance with the award criteria.
- Should the respective judging panel believe that no nomination meets the criteria or standard of excellence required, it will not be obliged to confer the particular award.
- Region winners are announced at a regional awards ceremony in your region.
- Region winners automatically become national finalists.
- Where there is only one nomination in a category, it will be considered by judges as to whether it is suitable to win the award at the region level, and suitable to progress to the national level.
- All decisions of the judging panel are final, and no correspondence will be entered into.

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# AWARD CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA



# INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

## FRANK STEWART DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

**Eligibility:** Nominees can only be nominated by a third party who is an active Parks and Leisure Australia member.

**Description:** The Frank Stewart Distinguished Service award is the longest standing award and introduced by the Australian Leisure Institute. Laurie Boyd was the first recipient. Named after a former Federal Minister for Tourism and Recreation, this is the most prestigious individual award bestowed by Parks and Leisure Australia. The award recognises the significant contribution an individual has made to the development, promotion and advocacy of the parks and leisure industry through their personal and professional endeavours over a substantial period.

**Prize:** The Frank Stewart Distinguished Service Award winner receives an Honorary Life Membership to Parks and Leisure Australia and a commemorative plaque acknowledging the awarding of this prestigious honour.

### **Criteria:**

1. A description of the nominated person's demonstrated outstanding commitment and service to the parks and leisure industry, both within the state and nationally, taking into consideration their length of contribution and their impact on the industry.
2. The contributions that have enhanced the development of colleagues within their workplace, Parks and Leisure Australia, and/or the broader parks and leisure industry, taking into consideration specific achievements and any barriers that were overcome.
3. Demonstrated high standard of professionalism and outstanding leadership within the parks and leisure industry (a minimum of 10 years), membership to the National Board, Regional Council, PLA Advisory or other parks and leisure committees.
4. Personal and professional contributions that have enhanced the standard of the industry as a profession including regularly contributing to each State Regional Council's events, committees, and projects.

### **General Information**

- You will be given the opportunity to provide up to three (3) files of supporting documentation which should include letters of support and/or commendations that demonstrate the extent to which the nominee participates, supports, and contributes to the industry.
- Please include a 50-word summary of achievements for promotional purposes.
- Please provide a profile image of the nominee (in high resolution jpeg format).

# DAVID ALDOUS EMERGING LEADER AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** Students (TAFE or University), graduates, employees, and young professionals within the industry.

**Eligibility:** They may either self-nominate or be nominated by a third party (who is an active Parks and Leisure Australia member). All TAFE, University PhD students and graduates are eligible to apply. Parks and Leisure Australia encourage all higher education institutions to nominate as well as encouraging their students/graduates to nominate.

**Description:** This award seeks to recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions made by a student or emerging professional in a course of study (or recently completed) leading to a nationally recognised qualification in the sector throughout Australia or who has made a significant contribution to the parks and leisure industry.

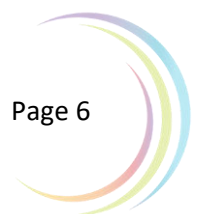
**Prize:** National finalists receive a ticket to the National Awards of Excellence Gala Dinner, one night's accommodation and return flights. In addition, they are awarded a trip to the Recreation Aotearoa (previously NZRA) National Conference (including flights and accommodation) in November 2023 and a 12-month Parks and Leisure Australia membership.

## Criteria:

1. Evidence of pursuit of excellence in career to date and/or commitment to professional development through education and training.
2. Relevant personal achievements, effective communication skills and evidence of teamwork.
3. Capacity to be an effective ambassador for the parks and leisure sector and awareness of the current issues facing the sector.
4. Evidence of contribution to Parks and Leisure Australia, State Regional Council, events, committees, and projects.

## General Information

- You will be given the opportunity to provide up to three (3) files of supporting documentation which should include letters of support and/or commendation that demonstrate the extent to which the nominee participates, supports and contributes to the industry (the contribution could be through research, volunteering, participation and contribution to projects and or a person who continues to contribute to their education institute within the parks and leisure sector).
- Please include a 50-word summary of achievements for promotional purposes.
- Please provide a profile image of the nominee (in high resolution jpeg format).



# **ORGANISATIONAL AWARDS**

## **COMMUNITY BASED INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR AWARD**

**Target Industry Segment:** Local governments, community organisations and groups that educate and celebrate our industry through enhanced community connection and participation.

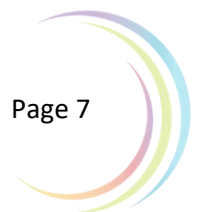
**Description:** This award is designed to recognise the combined effort that is required to successfully plan, organise, and manage effective initiatives, projects, programs, events and/or festivals which promote and enhance leisure time for a number of social, environmental and economic benefits to the community. Evidence of success should form a component of the submission.

### **Criteria:**

1. Describe how the initiative is new or different to existing programs/events within the industry and state what aspects contribute to the initiative's excellence.
2. Describe the initiative/ event's ability to meet specific target group needs and address gaps including target audience and participants involved, and a gender breakdown. How was the initiative/event managed based on best practice/ leading practice, including how a gender and inclusivity lens was applied?
3. Explain how the initiative or event benefits diverse community groups and contributes to the health and well-being of the community as a whole.
4. Demonstrate how the initiative presents a visionary approach or innovative concept to address a specific need or issue.
5. Describe the extent to which the initiative benefits diverse community groups and enhances community health and wellbeing.
6. What are the obstacles that you needed to overcome and how successful were you in achieving the objectives of the event/ initiative. Demonstrate the transferability of key learnings.

### **What the judges are looking for:**

- Demonstrates outcomes the initiative achieved.
- The impact the initiative/s has on bringing the community together.
- The extent to which the program celebrates access for all, equity, and equality.
- Promotes the diversity and reflects the cultural and heritage of the community.
- Information on how it reduces the impact to the environment and promotes liveability.





# ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** Organisations, groups, or individuals, that are taking action to protect or enhance the environment or are increasing understanding of environmental issues within their community.

**Description:** This award celebrates and acknowledges those who protect nature and parks, improve climate resilience, ensure sustainability, and care for our land, as well as champions in all of these areas as part of this award. Awarded to an individual, a team, or an organisation for the development of innovative processes, practices, or technologies that contribute to the development of a sustainable future. Developing and implementing a sustainable approach to economic, social, and environmental concerns should be integrated into all core activities in addition to complying with industry standards and best practices. Those responsible for subordinate strategies to an institution's overarching strategic plan are not included in this category.

## Criteria:

1. Demonstrate how the project has met or exceeded its objectives in terms of mitigating potential environmental impacts and/or implementing environmental protection measures, including the significance and magnitude of such actions.
2. Demonstrate how sustainability has been promoted or communicated to the community
3. Demonstrate how the project will adhere to or expand upon best practice sustainability outcomes while ensuring that an optimum environmental outcome achieved.
4. Describe the level of engagement of First Nations or Indigenous Communities in the development of the project. Demonstrate how the engagement techniques for the project were appropriate, meaningful, and applicable.
5. Describe strategies used to conserve and enhance natural features, wildlife and flora, landscape features, buildings, and structures.
6. How have these leadership activities positively impacted the environment, local, regional, and national, both now and for the future?

## What Judges are looking for:

- Judges will be looking for evidence of a clear strategic approach and success of implementation.
- Implemented a significant or transformative program and/or processes that enhance service delivery, lower costs and, create a green and/or sustainable environment.
- Demonstrated their accomplishments in multiple operational areas, including facility (includes parks/reserves) lifecycle management, supply chain management, community engagement, employee involvement, and product development and delivery.
- How stakeholders at all levels are engaged in powerful strategic conversations.
- How a truly integrated plan is developed and communicated, including the leadership of change and innovation to turn ideas into action.

# STRATEGIC AND MASTER PLANNING AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** State and local governments, consultants, community organisations and state associations.

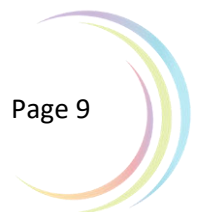
**Description:** This award recognises the development of strategies for parks, open space, sport, recreation, and leisure opportunities by rewarding outstanding examples of strategic planning that have enriched and revitalised a community.

## **Criteria:**

1. Demonstrate how the plan aligns with a planning matter of local, regional, state/territory, national and global significance. Outline how the plan advances the importance of planning within your community or sector.
2. Provide a clear description of: the approach adopted, innovations and defining features of the plan, the extent to which leading practice is demonstrated in the plan, and which industry networks provided input into the strategy / plan?
3. What is the level of commitment to driving change and addressing environmental, social, health and wellbeing concerns within the community?
4. Demonstrate how the engagement techniques and methods for the strategy or plan were appropriate, meaningful, and applicable. Outline how the techniques contributed to positive outcomes.
5. Demonstrate the size and complexity of strategy/master plan relative to funding and resources for engagement and endorsement.

## **What the judges are looking for:**

- Demonstrates alignment to strategic drivers and initiatives.
- Demonstrates integrated planning: national, state, regional and/or local.
- Provides a high return on investment.
- Demonstrates your organisation has a better idea of how to allocate resources to align with goals.
- Planning projects which demonstrate that one of its objectives is to enhance the community's ability to respond to chronic and accurate shocks.
- Demonstrates the community engagement process used to endorse the strategy or strategic plan.



# COMMUNITY FACILITY OF THE YEAR AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** Local governments, leisure management groups, architects, designers and contractors.

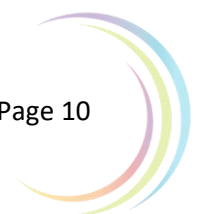
**Description:** This community facility award recognises facilities that demonstrate innovative features of design, development, and operation.

**Criteria:**

1. Does the development of the facility seek to address social drivers and or respond to the need and expectations of the community?
2. List the innovative and defining features of the facility and the outcomes and impact on the community and sector. Be sure to include to what extent the facility meets specific/target group's needs.
3. Describe the size and complexity of facility relative to funding and resources available, including the benefits relative to cost.
4. Demonstrate how the facility puts the environment first through climate mitigation strategies and features. Include whether it has been planned and designed through a codesign process and any other leading practices of engagement throughout the development of the facility.
5. Describe the transferability of key learnings, governance structures applied in decision making and operation, and the extent to which the facility fosters community pride.

**What the judges are looking for:**

- Planning project that demonstrates good governance, project management and implementation which result in the development, redevelopment of changes to the facility.
- Promotes good asset management.
- Demonstrates the value of the facility to the community.
- Reduces the impact to the environment and promotes sound economic operation and promotes inclusive practices.
- Articulates the role of the facility within the community and the region.



# PARK OF THE YEAR AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** Local governments, community organisations, designers, and contractors.

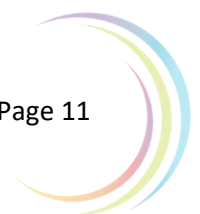
**Description:** This award celebrates and promotes vibrant, successful well designed and managed new or significantly revitalised parks/ open spaces by recognising and rewarding exceptional examples of best practice in terms of design and management. This includes parks and open spaces that are large, small, linear, along transport corridors, road closures, foreshore and reclaimed urban spaces.

## **Criteria:**

1. Demonstrate how the project aligns with a planning matter of local, regional, state/territory or national significance. What is the role, form, and function of the park, describe the size and complexity relative to funding and resources available?
2. How does the design and development of the park put the environment and people first, what are the innovative and defining features and benefits?
3. Describe the extent to which the Park has achieved outcomes versus intention, what leading practice was applied to the park design, community engagement and delivery.
4. Demonstrate how the planning, design and construction of the park presents a visionary approach or an innovative concept to address a specific need(s) or issue(s).
5. Describe the Parks contribution to the community, what achievements and benefits were realised through this project.

## **What the judges are looking for:**

- Promotes the benefits and the role it plays within the green network.
- Demonstrates measures taken to enhance biodiversity, habitat co-location, liveability, and its ability to reduce temperatures, connect and celebrate the communities' culture and heritage.
- Articulates the role of the park within the community and the region.
- Demonstrates the role it plays to foster and build community engagement.
- Provides significant value to the community.
- Description of the special features or element/s which resolves or responds to a problem within the park.



# PLAYSPACE AWARD (<\$0.5M)

**Target Industry Segment:** Local governments, landscape architects and designers, contractors, and equipment suppliers.

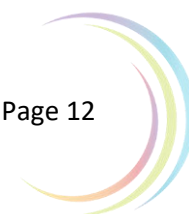
**Description:** This award is given to a playspace under the value of \$500,000 that involves a range of stakeholders, contributes to the creation of a sense of "place" for its local community and exhibits landscape and/or structural design innovation that delights and aids childhood development.

## **Criteria:**

1. How was the project initiated? Describe how it aligns to local, regional, state/territory or national significance.
2. Outline how a gender lens has been applied to the planning and design of the play space and how effective it is in addressing social drivers and the voices of the community.
3. What features, elements and materials make it different from other play spaces? Include durability of the park, environmental initiative, and the extent of leading practice in the project.
4. Outline the benefits of the project to the community and demonstrate whether the play space has been embraced by the community and meets specific clients/target group needs.
5. Demonstrate how the engagement techniques and methods for the play space were appropriate, meaningful, and applicable. Outline how the techniques contributed to a positive outcome and achieved excellence.
6. Outline the size and complexity of the play space relative to funding and resources.

## **What the judges are looking for:**

- Developed in accordance with the Local Government's Playspace Strategy and or Open Space Strategy.
- Demonstrates the development of an asset management and replacement plan.
- The extent to which the playspace features are intergenerational.
- The extent to which the playspace enhances the economic, environmental, and social benefits to the region.
- Information on the value it brings to the community, demonstrates how it challenges learning, sensory and development outcomes.
- Description of how it is integrated within its surrounding environment.
- Information on the partnerships developed and the outcomes of the evaluation process.



# PLAYSPACE AWARD (>\$0.5M)

**Target Industry Segment:** Local governments, landscape architects and designers, contractors, and equipment suppliers.

**Description:** This award is given to a playspace over the value of \$500,000 that involves a range of stakeholders, contributes to the creation of a sense of "place" for its local community and exhibits landscape and/or structural design innovation that delights and aids childhood development.

## **Criteria:**

1. How was the project initiated? Describe how it aligns to local, regional, state/territory or national significance.
2. Outline how a gender lens has been applied to the planning and design of the play space and how effective it is in addressing social drivers and the voices of the community.
3. What features, elements and materials make it different from other play spaces and how durable is it and what is the extent of leading practice
4. Outline the benefits of the project to the community and demonstrate whether the play space has been embraced by the community and meets specific clients/target group needs.
5. Demonstrate how the engagement techniques and methods for the play space were appropriate, meaningful, and applicable.
6. Outline how the techniques contributed to a positive outcome and achieved excellence.

## **What the judges are looking for:**

- Developed in accordance with the Local Government's Play Space Strategy and or Open Space Strategy.
- Demonstrates the development of an asset management and replacement plan.
- The extent to which the playspace features are intergenerational.
- The extent to which the playspace enhances the economic, environmental, and social benefits to the region.
- Information on the value it brings to the community, demonstrates how it challenges learning, sensory and development outcomes.
- Description of how it is integrated within its surrounding environment.
- Information on the partnerships developed and the outcomes of the evaluation process.



# BEST REGIONAL/ RURAL INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTION AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** Regional and rural communities within Australia, state and local governments, community organisations.

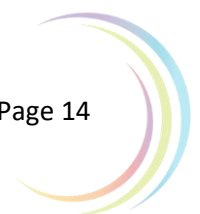
**Description:** Regional/Rural Australia includes all the towns, small cities and areas that lie beyond the major capital cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Darwin, Hobart, and Canberra), who make a significant contribution through community initiatives which contribute to the parks and leisure industry. These projects can be playspaces, events, tourism, trails, programs, repurposing of facilities and environmental initiatives (i.e., water saving, habitat development and restoration projects).

## **Criteria:**

1. Demonstrate how the initiative addresses regional and rural social, cultural, heritage, environmental or economic issues, and what benefits it brings to the community.
2. Describe the governance, leadership and decision-making process adopted in implementing the initiative.
3. Demonstrate how the initiative presents a visionary approach or innovative concept to address a specific need or issue.
4. Demonstrate the achievements and benefits to the community and the region.
5. Demonstrate how the engagement techniques and methods for the project were appropriate, meaningful, and applicable. Outline how the techniques contributed to positive outcomes.

## **What the judges are looking for:**

- The extent to which the initiative addresses any social, cultural, heritage, environmental or economic issues.
- Innovative approaches taken.
- Information on the barriers and difficulties and the extent to which they have been overcome.
- Highlight the community members which supported and benefited from the initiative.
- Contribution to lasting solutions and sustainability.
- Information on the achievements and the benefits to the community, the region and the industry.



# RESEARCH AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** Universities, Educational Institutes, Centre for Research Councils, Allied Industry bodies and consultants.

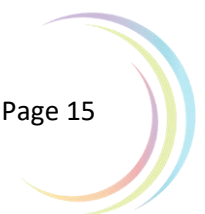
**Description:** This award acknowledges outstanding research achievement by a group or individual, professionals, student or academics who have made a significant contribution to the parks and leisure industry through expanded knowledge enhancement promoting the benefits or importance of the parks and leisure sector in Australian society.

## **Criteria:**

1. Provide a clear description of the approach adopted to develop the research.
2. Demonstrate how the research addresses a specific issue within the parks and leisure industry, and independent thought.
3. Demonstrate how the research can be applied to current parks and leisure operations throughout Australia.
4. Demonstrate that the research has been peer reviewed and is used within the industry.
5. How does the research demonstrate excellence in the consideration of economic, environmental, and social factors? How does it add value to or impact the Parks Leisure industry?

## **What the judges are looking for:**

- Methods used to develop the research.
- Does the research address a specific issue within the parks and leisure industry?
- Is the research of independent thought?
- The extent to which the research has or can be applied to current parks and leisure operations throughout Australia.
- Authorship or co-authorship of peer-reviewed published materials such as journal articles, articles in conference proceedings, monographs, books, book chapters, artistic works, software development, or other professional and technical documents.
- At least one, but no more than three, external letters of support should be included in the materials submitted for consideration. External letters of support provide judges with helpful insights about the contribution of the research accomplishments to the industry and society.





# BEST USE OF TECHNOLOGY AWARD

**Target Industry Segment:** Local Governments, Educational Institutes, IT businesses, Allied Industry bodies and consultants.

**Description:** This award acknowledges outstanding and innovative achievement in the area of technology application and how that application has benefited the industry.

## **Criteria:**

1. Demonstrate the technology application and why it stands out as award worthy.
2. Demonstrate how the technology is new and accessible to the parks and leisure industry.
3. Demonstrate the extent to which the technology fulfils a gap within the industry.
4. Demonstrate how the technology promotes efficiencies, reduces impacts on resources and the ease of application.
5. Demonstrates excellence in the technology's consideration of economic, environmental, and social factors (including a gender lens) and the value to the industry.

## **What the judges are looking for:**

- Technology application and why it stands out as award worthy.
- Is the technology new and accessible to the parks and leisure industry?
- The extent to which it fulfils a gap within the industry.
- How does it promote efficiencies, impact on resources and ease of application?
- The extent to which the technology is innovative and or improves the practice/progress within the industry.
- What is its return on investment?
- Why have you used the selected technology?

