



PARKS & LEISURE
AUSTRALIA
(VIC/TAS)

ANNUAL REPORT

2024/25

Our region offers a dedicated place for members to receive support, engage, learn, mentor, and network. We provide an immersive program of events and initiatives, both in-person and online, year-round. This year we delivered more than 14 events to over 1,000 attendees including:

- AUGUST 2024: AusPlay Data Webinar
- AUGUST 2024: Leadership Program
- SEPTEMBER 2024: Melbourne Park Managers Forum
- OCTOBER 2024: Urban October Regional Seminars – Gippsland + Grampians
- OCTOBER 2024: Nature Play and Child Wellbeing Webinar
- DECEMBER 2024: Designing and Maintaining Grass Sports Fields Webinar
- DECEMBER 2024: Tree-friendly Pavements Webinar
- FEBRUARY 2025: Fair Access Summit
- MARCH 2025: Open Space Planners Network – Ruffey Lake Park Site Tour
- MARCH 2025: Costs with Designing + Building a Field of Play Webinar
- MARCH 2025: How to Become a Nature Stewards Host Webinar
- APRIL 2025: Melbourne Park Managers Forum – Bayside
- MAY 2025: Region Conference
- MAY 2025: Awards of Excellence Gala

It takes a collective effort to deliver this exciting calendar of events and we thank all of the presenters for volunteering their time to showcase the best our industry has to offer, and of course our program partners and sponsors who without them we couldn't host this many events!

Parks and Leisure Australia VIC/TAS partners with like-minded organisations who are equally committed to strengthening communities and improving the lives of people through quality recreational places, facilities and programs. We were excited to announce our Region Partners for 2025:

- SPORTENG
- Green By Nature
- Marsupial Landscape Management
- Terrain Group
- Furphy Infrastructure Group

None of this was possible without our Region Council's incredible leadership. I'm grateful for your unwavering dedication and selfless voluntary support of our industry. I'd like to extend a huge thanks to former Vice President Sam Taylor who finished his term this year and stepped away from the Region Council.



Andrea Szymanski

President, PLA VIC/TAS

REGION COUNCIL

Our Region Council plays a vital role in championing parks and leisure in Victoria and Tasmania.



**ANDREA
SZYMANSKI**

PRESIDENT

City of Manningham
(Wurundjeri Land)



**SAM
TAYLOR**

VICE-PRESIDENT

City of Boroondara
(Wurundjeri Land)



**BEN
MANNING**

TREASURER

Solucio
(Bunurong Land)



**NAOMI
PATON**

SECRETARY

Sport and Recreation Victoria
(Wurundjeri Land)



**MARK
COREA**

COUNCILLOR

xyst
(Wurundjeri Land)



**LISA
GAYDON**

COUNCILLOR

Parks Victoria
(Wurundjeri Land)



**LIAM
COLE**

COUNCILLOR

Wellington Shire Council
(Gunaikurnai Land)



**DION
GOSLING**

COUNCILLOR

106 Architects
(Wurundjeri Land)



**ALLI
COOMBE**

COUNCILLOR (TAS)

Clarence City Council
(Mumirimina Land)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

We are also fortunate to have co-opted members who provide additional guidance and support to our Regional Council:



**Rachel
Thorpe**

Hume City Council
Wurundjeri land



**Michael
Tanner**

Banyule City Council
Wurundjeri land



**Lauren
Close**

Otium Planning Group
Wurundjeri land



**Mel
Pratt**

Cardinia Shire Council
Wurundjeri/Bunurong land



**Jo
Hansen**

City of Melbourne
Wurundjeri land



**Amy
Walker**

City of Devonport
Pannilerpanner land

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REGION PARTNERS

Parks and Leisure Australia VIC/TAS partners with like-minded organisations who are equally committed to strengthening communities and improving the lives of people through quality recreational places, facilities and programs. We were excited to announce our Region Partners for 2025:



With this announcement, we see **SPORTENG** continue their long-term support of PLA into 2025. As usual, they will have a strong presence at our upcoming conference (20-21 May 2025) and help us deliver a member-focused partner event planned for Parks Week (3-10 March 2025) – watch this space for more news...

Green By Nature also return in 2025, not only featuring at our conference but also helping us deliver member events during Parks Week and focusing on continuing their support of our Leadership Program – now into its 12th edition!

A former region partner returns to the fold after a couple of years hiatus, with **Marsupial Landscape Management** signing on for 2025. Focusing on supporting our conference in May and supporting our promotional efforts, stay tuned for more coming soon.

We are also thrilled to welcome on board **Terrain Group** who have been a long-time supporter of PLA through our conferences right across the country. Keep an eye out for their eye-catching double booth at our upcoming conference and project case studies coming your way!

Last, but certainly not least, is **Furphy Infrastructure Group**... the parent entity for a group of companies specialising in the provision of community infrastructure products & services:

- Furphy Foundry
- CIVIC Infrastructure Services
- Landmark Products
- Trailworx

You will catch Trailworx exhibiting at our conference, whilst Landmark Products will not only be bringing you a barista-made caffeine fix to the conference with their coffee cart sponsorship, they are also the major partner of our Awards of Excellence dinner.

"I can't wait to get stuck in with our region partners for 2025. Each company is committed to strengthening our industry and we look forward to continuing to add value to our members... watch this space!"



Dan Ferguson
Executive Officer, VIC/TAS

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AusPlay Changes to methods and reporting



AUGUST 2024

AusPlay Data Webinar

We were joined by Gary Rauber, Assistant Director at the Australian Sports Commission, as we hosted a webinar diving into the world of AusPlay Data. Australia's national sport and physical activity survey, AusPlay, has been undergoing its biggest change since it was launched in 2015. Whilst the survey continues to collect a wealth of information on participation to inform strategy and planning (in fact, it now collects more data than ever before), the way in which that data is gathered has shifted from telephone to online.

Thanks to all who came along and took part in the session as we explored why and how the survey has changed, the improvements that have been made, and what practitioners can expect when first results from the new method are released later this year. Of course, a big thank you must also go out to Gary for his time and expertise.

[READ MORE](#)



AUGUST 2024

Leadership Program

Parks and Leisure Australia Vic/Tas are thrilled to have hosted our annual Leadership Program this August delivered by CEO and leadership mentor, Cameron Schwab from [designCEO](#), and supported by our partners [Green by Nature](#).

Participants took part in four sessions focused on high-performance leadership habits to enable and establish daily practice of leadership excellence. The program is designed to prepare leaders for high-impact leadership roles, recognising the need to perform well now while at all times evolving your leadership game. Cam teaches leadership from the inside-out. Beyond developing leadership competency, he notes that modern leadership demands courage, composure, humility and compassion.

With the first of four sessions held online, our participants got an introduction to the course and the opportunity to meet their facilitator as well as fellow program participants. From there sessions were held in person at the Oxford Scholar in Melbourne's CBD.

While working through the program participants also took part in 'Lunch with a Leader' where each week they had the opportunity to seek advice and gain knowledge from our special guest CEOs and leaders:

- Jacqui Weatherill, CEO City of Greater Dandenong
- Kristin Davies, National President PLA
- Stefan Ratnasingham, National Finance Director PLA
- Allison Beckwith, CEO Banyule City Council

A big thank you to all our special guests for volunteering their time and providing invaluable insight to participants.

[READ MORE](#)



SEPTEMBER 2024

Melbourne Park Managers Forum

The Melbourne Park Managers Forum (MPMF) is thrilled to have held the 2024 Park Managers Forum and Site Tour in the Docklands, hosted by the City of Melbourne. Park managers and senior management staff from a range of Melbourne Metropolitan LGAs came together to explore public space sites across the City of Melbourne and share resources and information relating to parks planning, management and operations. The day began with curated presentations and a Q and A session, before braving the Melbourne weather to head out for site visits across the City.

- Stop 1: Up first, it was a full house at the Greenline Project Hub learning all about how the north bank of the Yarra River – Birrarung will be transformed.
- On Route: Then we braved the weather as we headed on foot to our next stop via the world-first trial to reintroduce mistletoe to the trees of Melbourne.
- Stop 2: Our next stop, Southbank Boulevard and Dodd St, where this once busy street has been transformed into one of Australia's most pedestrian-friendly places.
- Via Laneways: Exploring Melbourne's laneways on the way to our next stop, as we heard about City of Melbourne's Green Your Laneway program turning city laneways into leafy, green and welcoming places for the community.
- Stop 3: 'Rocks on Wheels' designed by Mike Hewson and inspired by the Diane Arbus photograph with the same title. An exciting space for risky play, challenging the conventions of playgrounds, public artworks and landscape projects.

A big thank you must go out to Andrew Davidson and the team at City of Melbourne for hosting.

[READ MORE](#)



OCTOBER 2024

Urban October Regional Seminars – Gippsland + Grampians

To celebrate 'Urban October' we teamed up with [SPORTENG](#) to host educational seminars in two major regional locations in Victoria to recognise World Habitat Day (7th Oct) and World Cities Day (31st Oct).

The seminars, titled *“Doing more with less – How to make your Fields of Play resilient to cater for mother nature and intended level of use”* focused on upskilling attendees in field of play management. Our Gippsland seminar was held today at the newly developed Bellbird Park East Pavilion where attendees were also treated to a site tour from the team at Baw Baw Shire Council.

A wonderful opportunity for our regional members to get together, network and learn about effective solutions to enhance field of play resilience improving the playability and longevity of their sports fields. Thanks to all who attended and to our presenters SPORTENG and Baw Baw Shire Council for their time and expertise.

[READ MORE](#) – Gippsland

[READ MORE](#) – Grampians + Loddon Mallee



OCTOBER 2024

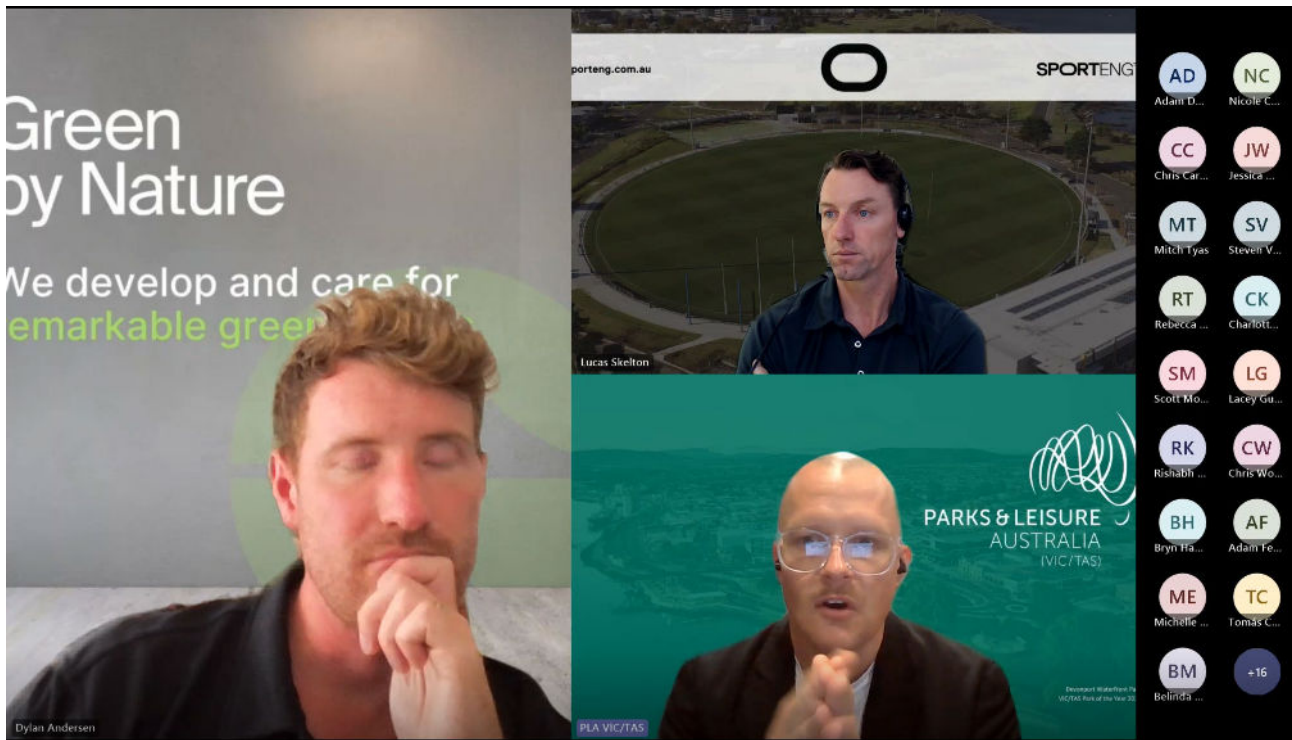
Nature Play and Child Wellbeing Webinar

In celebration of Children's Week 2024 we hosted a webinar exploring the benefits of Nature Play and the critical role it plays in supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing.

We were thrilled to hear from Dr Kristel Alla and Dr Mandy Truong from the Australian Institute of Family Studies as they discussed their recently released paper 'Nature Play and Child Wellbeing' and examined what the research evidence says about the different types of contacts with nature that promote child wellbeing.

With Nature Play being at the forefront of many contemporary developments, the webinar offered valuable insight for anyone involved in the planning and design of public playspaces. We'd like to thank all who attended, particularly our presenters, Kristel and Mandy, for their time and expertise.

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DECEMBER 2024

Designing and Maintaining Grass Sports Fields Webinar

With a growing population we need to not only deliver more green field spaces to meet the needs of the community sport and recreation use but also maximise the carrying capacity of existing sports fields. However, there are challenges for Councils to delivering and managing these spaces to make them suitable for play all year round.

With this in mind we held a webinar on World Soil Day (WSD) 2024 delving into this important discussion surrounding how to design and maintain grass sports fields to keep them open more weeks of the year so people can be more active more often.

We were thrilled to hear from the team at [SPORTENG](#) as they dove into design considerations in constructing grass sports fields for community use with an insight into short and long-term design thinking and cost considerations. While maintenance experts [Green by Nature](#) walked attendees through some of the lessons learnt in turf management, and why choosing the right type of grass is important in maximising use throughout the year and keeping fields suitable for play for longer.

Thanks to all who joined on for this fantastic discussion, and to our presenters Lucas Skelton and Dylan Andersen for their time and expertise. You can find the full webinar recording below.

[READ MORE](#)



DECEMBER 2024

Tree-friendly Pavements Webinar

Parks and Leisure Australia VIC/TAS were thrilled to host a webinar with the team at [Porous Lane](#) exploring their state-of-the-art pavement technology developed via research undertaken in collaboration with the University of Melbourne.

Porous Lane's innovative permeable pavement has been adopted by numerous councils to support sustainable infrastructure, particularly in parklands and around trees. Made from up to 50% Australian recycled tyre material, Porous Lane offers a range of multifaceted benefits, including passive irrigation, stormwater treatment, reduced excavation needs, and minimized risk of cracks and trip hazards from tree root movement.

The presentation covered the extensive research background behind Porous Lane's technology, which includes rigorous laboratory testing and field monitoring conducted in collaboration with the University of Melbourne, ensuring its effectiveness and durability in real-world applications.

A big thanks to all attendees who came along on the day, and to our presenters Associate Professor Mahdi Disfani and Bradley Camgoz Posselt for their time and expertise.

[READ MORE](#)

FAIR ACCESS SUMMIT FEB 19 | IKON PARK



PARKS & LEISURE
AUSTRALIA
(VIC/TAS)

CHANGE
OUR
GAME

VICTORIA
State
Government

FEBRUARY 2025

Fair Access Summit

Parks and Leisure Australia Vic/Tas were thrilled to hold our **Fair Access Summit** last week at Ikon Park, hosted by the wonderful Jacara Egan. Exploring the Fair Access Policy implementation 6+ months on and next steps in Councils journey, thanks to all 100+ of you who came along to the event.

A wonderful day bringing together leaders in local government to share and learn from success stories in gender equity and provide educational support to inform Councils next steps in implementing Fair Access Policies within their communities.

Thank you to the Councils, Universities, and sector partners who were part of this fantastic event bringing participants a unique mix of story sharing, education and networking. And to the Victorian Government's Office for Women in Sport and Recreation for making this event possible through the 2023-24 Change Our Game Community Activations Grants Program.

Dive into the content from the summit below, where you can download presentation slides, access resources and view the photo gallery from the day.

[READ MORE](#)



MARCH 2025

Open Space Planners Network – Ruffey Lake Park Site Tour

We were thrilled to host the latest Open Space Planners Network event as we explored Ruffey Lake Park and Manningham Council's Ruffey Lake Park Landscape Masterplan in celebration of [Parks Week](#).

Hosted by PLA VIC/TAS President Andrea Szymanski and Senior Open Space Development Officer Cormac McCarthy from Manningham Council, attendees heard from council staff who implemented the plan, alongside landscape architects and more as we explored the park that 'has it all'.

Attendees were also treated to an industry lunch and meet and greet with the Parks and Leisure Australia Vic/Tas Region Council prior to the tour, courtesy of our partners at [Green By Nature](#). A fantastic opportunity for our open space industry to get together and make connections. A big thanks must go out to our partners Green by Nature and Manningham Council for making this fantastic event possible.

You can find more information on Ruffey Lake Park and the Open Space Planners Network below, along with a photo gallery from the day.

[READ MORE](#)



MARCH 2025

Costs with Designing + Building a Field of Play Webinar

Parks and Leisure Australia Vic/Tas were thrilled to host a webinar this week in collaboration with our partners [SPORTENG](#) exploring the costs associated with designing and building a Field of Play.

In the world of sports engineering, two fundamental processes stand at the forefront: designing and building. While they may seem intertwined, each plays a distinct role in creating innovative sports equipment, facilities, and experiences.

Designing is the initial phase of the development process, focusing on conceptualisation and planning. Building is the execution phase that transforms designs into tangible products. While designing and building serve different purposes, they are deeply interconnected. A well-designed product is only as good as its construction, and builders rely on the detailed specifications provided by designers.

The cost of designing and building a Field of Play can vary widely depending on factors like the size of the field, the type of playing surface (natural grass vs. artificial turf vs. hard surface), location, desired amenities (lighting, seating), and required site preparation. In this webinar, experts SPORTENG covered some of the key cost components that might be required and what the current market trends are. Attendees participated in a cost planning exercise in real time for 'PLA Reserve' getting a first-hand look at what really goes into the process of designing and building fit for purpose Fields of Play.

A big thanks must go out to our presenters Lucas Skelton, Andrew Morrow and Mardi Cuthbert from SPORTENG for their time and expertise. You can find the webinar recording below along with a useful resource for turf management solutions to optimise your sports fields.

[READ MORE](#)



MARCH 2025

How to Become a Nature Stewards Host

We joined the Victorian National Parks Association for an information session about how your council or organisation can get involved as a local host of a Nature Stewards course!

[Nature Stewards](#) is a multi-week course that connects curious people with their local and wider habitats. The course promotes environmental awareness and stewardship through discovery, action and ongoing learning.

Our content and curriculum are developed and delivered by leading scientists, conservation experts, Traditional Owners and environmental educators.

We've run over 45 courses with local councils and other organisations across Victoria for over 750 participants. We've worked with amazing expert facilitators, guest presenters and enjoyed some fabulous field trips.

In this webinar one of our current hosts, the City of Greater Geelong, shared a brief overview from a host perspective. We also dived into some more details about the program and end with an interactive Q&A session.

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APRIL 2025

Melbourne Park Managers Forum – Bayside

The Melbourne Park Managers Forum (MPMF) was thrilled to host the recent Park Managers Forum and Site Tour at Bayside City Council.

Park managers and senior management staff from a range of Melbourne Metropolitan LGAs came together to explore public space sites across Bayside and share resources and information relating to parks planning, management and operations. A fantastic day had by all. A big thank you must go out to Damian Carr, Parks Management Officer at Bayside City Council, for his time and organisation of the day.

See the schedule from the day below for more information on the sites visited and view the photo gallery from the event.

[READ MORE](#)



MAY 2025

Region Conference

We returned stronger than ever, heading to CENTREPIECE at the iconic Olympic Park in the heart of Melbourne for our 2025 Regional Conference and Awards of Excellence.

Across several dynamic days, over 350 attendees came together for an incredible program of networking, knowledge sharing, and showcasing the best our industry has to offer. As the only sector conference created by local government for local government and its supporters, it was a true celebration of the PEOPLE behind the PLACES.

We launched the event with inspiring opening keynotes from John Harnden and Sally Capp, followed by a thought-provoking panel of council CEOs. From there, delegates experienced two full days of rich content — more than 12 hours across three diverse streams.

And of course, we couldn't forget the social highlight of the year: the Awards of Excellence Gala Dinner, where we honoured the outstanding contributions across PLA Vic/Tas. We wrapped up on a high with a captivating closing keynote from Beau Miles.

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 Community Based Initiative of the Year Award - WINNER Belgrave South - 'Create, Protect, Love', Yarra Ranges Shire Council	 David Aldous Emerging Leader Award Ashley Dean, City of Stonnington
 Community Based Initiative of the Year Award - COMMENDATION Get Active in Darebin, Darebin City Council	 Environmental Stewardship Award More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West Program, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
 Best Use of Technology Award - WINNER Drowning Prevention Technology and Analytics, Lynxight	 Park of the Year Award - WINNER Whittlesea Public Gardens Revitalisation, City of Whittlesea
 Best Use of Technology Award - COMMENDATION Climate Resilience Index, Tract and OneMap	 Park of the Year Award - COMMENDATION Bedford Street Pocket Park, City of Melbourne
 Best Regional/Rural Industry Contribution Award - COMMENDATION Memorial Square Changing Places Facility, Colac Otway Shire	 Playspace (>500K) Award - WINNER Road Safety Centre, City of Launceston
 Community Facility of the Year Award- WINNER Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre, Darebin City Council and Clublinks	 Playspace (>500K) - COMMENDATION Bacchus Marsh All-Abilities Playground, Brand Architects + Moorabool Shire Council
 Community Facility of the Year Award- COMMENDATION Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment, Merri-bek City Council	 Playspace (<500K) - COMMENDATION Timbertop Park, City of Whittlesea
 Research Award ENJOY MAP for HEALTH, NARI, Boroondara City Council and Knox City Council	 Strategic and Master Planning Award Mordi Aquatic Centre, City of Kingston

MAY 2025

Awards of Excellence Gala Dinner

Following a fantastic evening at the Parks and Leisure Australia VIC/TAS Regional Awards of Excellence gala dinner at CENTREPIECE, we're excited to reveal the 2025 winners across our 11 award categories below.

With the event hosted by renowned tennis commentator and broadcaster Brett Phillips, we hope you enjoyed the celebration as much as we did, recognising the outstanding achievements and innovative contributions within our industry. Congratulations to all the exceptional nominees, and a special applause to our winners, who will now advance to the Parks and Leisure Australia National Awards of Excellence in Hobart this November. To learn more about the award-winning projects, please explore the links provided under each award category below.

[READ MORE](#)



PARKS & LEISURE
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(VIC/TAS)

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