

ANNUAL REPORT

23/24



PARKS & LEISURE
AUSTRALIA

PHOTO BY MARTINS CARDOSO

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National President
Les Munn

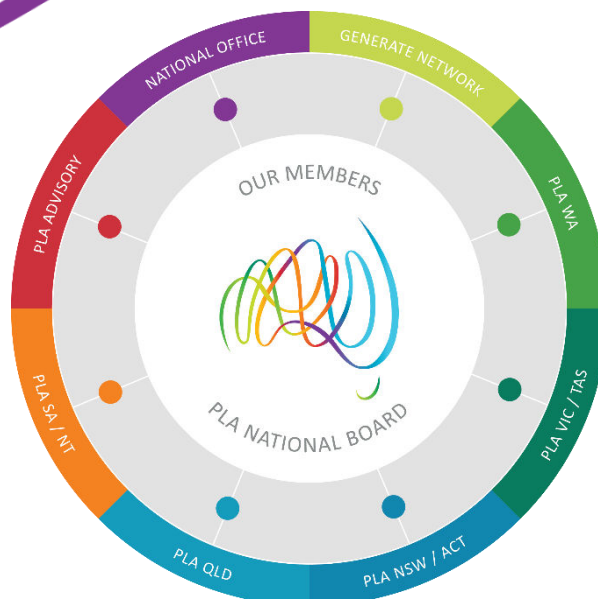
Deputy President
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Finance Director
Stefan Ratnasingham

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Paul Jane / Les Munn

Regional Representatives
Joshua Geraghty (QLD)
Hayley Ashworth (SA/NT)
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NATIONAL PARTNERS

We sincerely thank our national partners for their support.





Welcome Back Parks and
Leisure Australia!
We are PLA – Better Together!.”

- PHOTO BY LACHLAN ROSS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
OF COUNTRY

“

In the spirit of reconciliation, Parks and Leisure Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.”

- PHOTO BY LEIO MCLAREN

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“

Our sponsors, partners and supporters are the lifeblood of PLA and underpin the efforts of all the incredible volunteers across the nation. Without you we wouldn't be able to do what we do.”

- Les Munn, President Parks & Leisure Australia.



- PHOTO BY RACHEL CLAIRE



Les Munn
National President

NATIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

What an incredible year of growth and success for Parks and Leisure Australia. Above the waterline and below the waterline, we continue to improve our advocacy, the service offering, connection and events.

The membership is the highest in the organisation's history with over 3,000 members nation-wide and growing and our journey to a new way of working behind the scenes is nearing its completion (refer to the following page).

This year has also seen our regions held successful Regional Conferences in QLD, VIC/TAS, NSW/ACT and SA/NT. Our WA region has planned to have their Regional Conference later in 2024.

I want to express my gratitude to all of you who made our Joint International Congress in Adelaide an enormous success. It was a fantastic gathering of minds, bringing together professionals from around the world who share a common passion for enhancing the parks and leisure industry. The knowledge shared, connections made, and innovative ideas generated during this event are sure to have a great impact on our industry.

We also celebrated the remarkable accomplishments of our industry at the Awards of Excellence Gala, which took place at the Adelaide Oval. It was a night of recognition and inspiration, honouring and connecting with those who have made outstanding contributions to our industry. Congratulations to all the finalists who have been the best in their particular regions and are represented well at the Nationals. A big thank you goes also to the many judges who gave freely of their time to ensure we saw the best of the best in the finals.

As we move towards the end of the year, our team is hard at work ensuring our final events for the year are of great value and look forward to our National Conference – 'Cities at Play' in Brisbane, in October.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the National Board, for their support throughout a busy and transformative period in PLA's history. The expertise and commitment around the table is commendable and we're eagerly looking forward to what the future has in store for us.

Our valued government supporters

We are thankful for the support and investment by our government partners. This support enables the organisation to deliver important localised programs and benefits for members.

The Western Australian State Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries is a major supporter of Parks and Leisure Australia. Sport and recreation builds stronger, healthier, happier and safer communities.

In 2021 the Department of Local Government Sport, Cultural Industries (DLGSC) renewed PLAs peak body status for Western Australia and continues to support the WA region through funding to deliver programs and courses, professional development, research, and other special projects, building capacity to grow and support the parks and leisure industry.



**Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**

The Victorian State Government through the Department of Sport and Recreation is an ongoing supporter of Parks and Leisure Australia in key strategic project and events. Driving Access for All across sport and recreation.

In 2023/24 PLA VIC/TAS received funding to undertake the review and update of the Outdoor Fitness Equipment guidelines.



The South Australian State Government through the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing is a valued supporter of Parks and Leisure Australia enabling the delivery of events and professional development initiatives. This support has been integral to the success of the region.



Government of South Australia
Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing

A JOURNEY TO A NEW WAY OF WORKING...

Our Journey to a new way of working

Over the past five years we have been on a journey to a new way working to improve, mature and reimagine the organisation to better serve our members and the industry. The following page provides a timeline of progress and key initiatives and outlines our next steps on the journey.

2019 | STRATEGIC PLAN – PLA TOWARDS 2025

We undertook engagement with our members to devise a new strategic plan for the organisation – PLA Towards 2025.

2020 – 2021 | COVID PANDEMIC AND BUSINESS REVIEW

We undertook a comprehensive business and operational review that identified several areas for immediate action and improvement.

This led to a strategic pivot, ensuring that our industry-wide response to COVID-19 was robust while maintaining a strong organisational position.

2020 – 2021 | ICT AND SYSTEMS REVIEW

We initiated a thorough an ICT review, resulting in the implementation of new systems, including an upgraded finance system, a more efficient awards system, and significant conference improvements.

2022 – 2023 | ESTABLISHED A NEW OPERATING MODEL TO BEST SERVICE MEMBERS

Implemented Operational Enhancements:
Review and action on our National structure and operating model to better service the members and regions, made with our 2025 Strategy in mind.

Implemented transformation program:
Developed a new staffing model, centralised services to support regional collaboration, new finance system, CRM systems, website, member portal, CPD program, awards system and program delivery tools.

In 2023, we recommenced the development of our new contemporary constitution (started in 2020), to reflect the contemporary needs of the organisation and contribute to our strategic direction of being more inclusive and our goal of being formally recognised as a not-for-profit organisation.

2024 | NEW CONSTITUTION

Completes second phase of business and governance review.

Developed new draft constitution that responds to contemporary requirements and represents the best interests of all members and regions across Australia; ready for member engagement and ratification in October 2024.

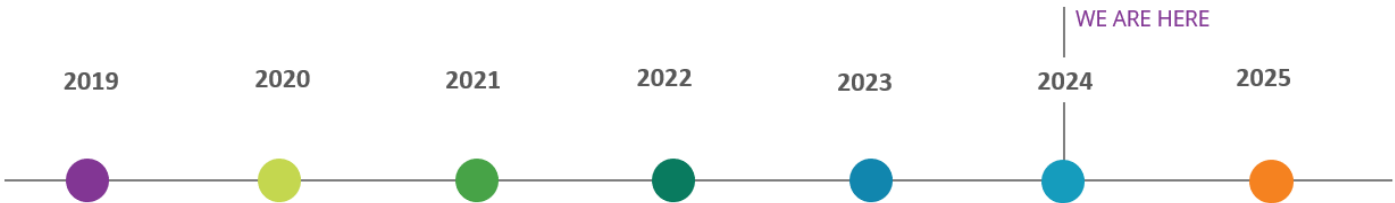
2024 - 2025 | NEXT STOP ON THE JOURNEY...

Once endorsed, embed new connotational changes and explore opportunities for PLA to seek charitable status.

Reintroduce the executive level management to PLA with the recruitment of a new CEO, National Executive Officer and other support staff to service the regions.

2025 | NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PLA

In 2025, we look to complete the PLA Towards 2025 and develop a new strategic plan with our members. The foundation work has been completed and we have arranged ourselves for success.





Stefan Ratnasingham
Finance Director

FINANCE DIRECTOR REPORT

It is with great pleasure to present the financial overview for Parks and Leisure Australia after joining the National Board towards the end of quarter three of the 2024 financial year. The year has seen continued growth in the organisation as noted by the growing revenue and by outperforming the budget set for the year.

The statement of profit or loss shows total revenue for the year is \$2,685,079 which is \$118,119 higher against a budget of \$2,435,363. Further to this we have outperformed last year's total revenue by \$292,904. This is thanks to growth in membership and professional development revenue coming from each of the regions. This highlights the value that Parks & Leisure Australia provides to our members.

Total expenses for the year was \$2,418,109 excluding tax, which is considerably higher than last year but was slightly over the total budgeted expenditure of \$2,411,839 by \$6,270. The primary drivers of this increased expenditure were related to our secretariats and conferences, reflecting the resumption of face-to-face activities and our commitment to delivering key projects and development opportunities for members. The rise in costs, particularly for services such as venue hire and travel, aligns with broader economic trends. Additionally, a portion of the expenditure was directed toward upgrading our online platform to enhance the member experience.

Overall net profit for the financial year is \$206,520 before tax compared to a budget of \$23,523 which means that Parks & Leisure Australia has returned \$182,997 or seven times more to the organisation than originally planned.

While the profit and loss statement is in good shape, it is important not to overlook the balance sheet. The overall equity has naturally increased due to the current year's earnings returned by the organisation. Additionally, following a thorough review of the accounts, some adjustments were made to certain balances on the balance sheet to rectify historical errors. Parks & Leisure Australia has engaged new external accountants to assist in this process, ensuring that such issues are avoided in the future.

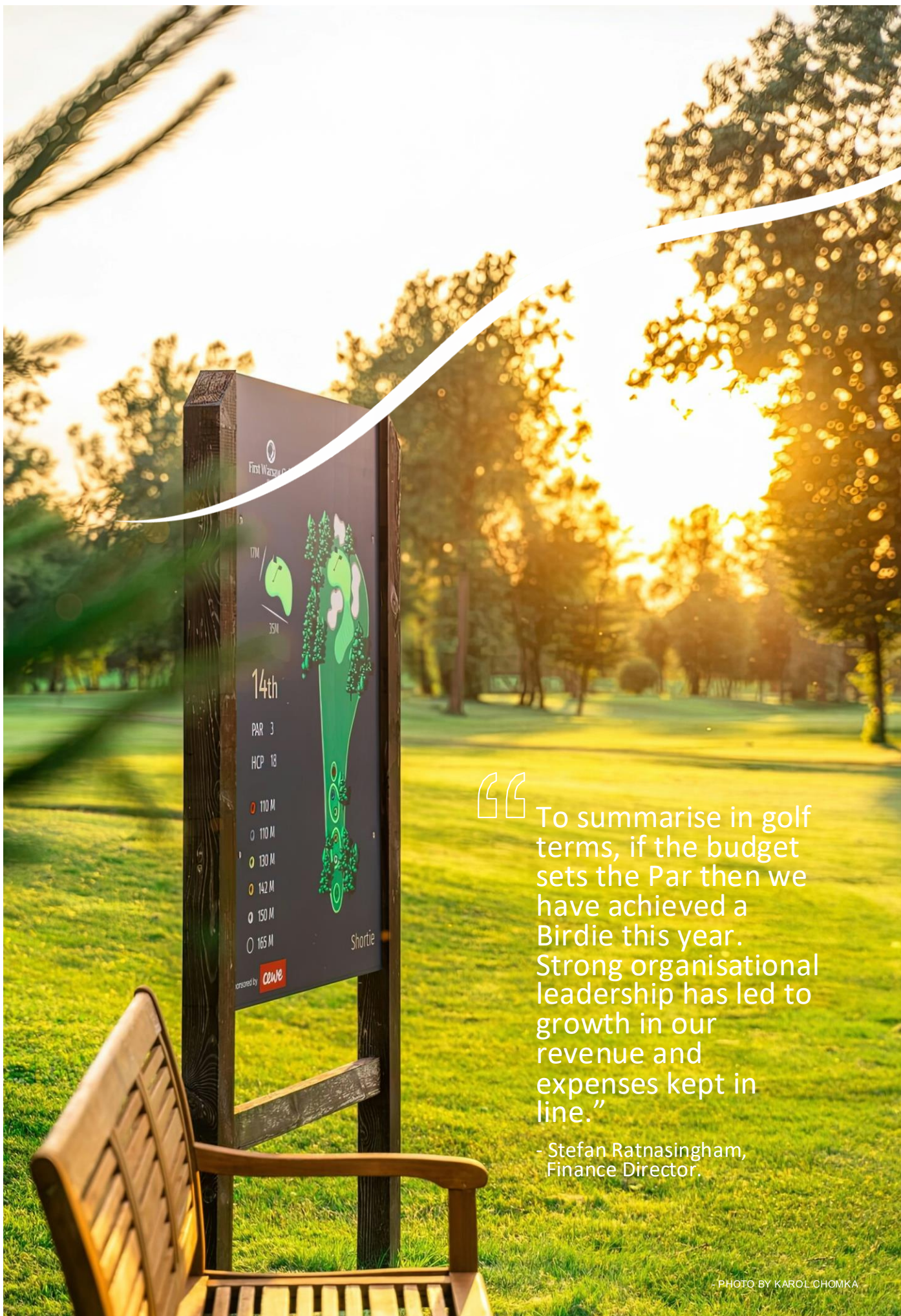
Total assets have grown over the year. Cash reserves for the organisation are healthy and will be sufficient to support the organisation in the upcoming year. Receivables have been reviewed and only minimal amounts were written off at the start of the 2025 financial year. A sign that our members want to be engaged with the organisation. Majority of the liabilities for Parks & Leisure Australia is our prepaid income, a sign of all the good things our organisation is to provide.

To summarise in golf terms, if the budget sets the par then we have achieved a birdie this year. Just a bit ahead of expectations. Strong organisational leadership has led to growth in our revenue and expenses kept in line.

In the 2025 financial year we will continue to face rising costs however if we continue to stay the course, reimagine professional development for our members to drive value and build on our current base we will continue to achieve great things.

It is a pleasure to serve on the National Board and work with some great people in our industry. I look forward to helping to create a financial vision for the organisation, so that we can continue to grow and better serve our industry as we start to focus on our strategic plan.

2023-24 Financial Statements are provided from page 21.



“To summarise in golf terms, if the budget sets the Par then we have achieved a Birdie this year. Strong organisational leadership has led to growth in our revenue and expenses kept in line.”

- Stefan Ratnasingham,
Finance Director.

- PHOTO BY KAROL CHOMKA



Tony Butler
President QLD

QLD REGIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

PLA QLD had another outstanding year, offering members various opportunities to connect and learn from sector leaders and peers. Our nine committed volunteers on the Regional Council have worked tirelessly to expand membership in QLD and facilitate connections and learning. I'm deeply thankful for their dedication and support.

In the past year, our professional development initiatives have been busy with activities such as webinars, forums, technical tours, and our Annual Conference and Awards for Excellence. In August, we organised an industry forum on the Gold Coast focusing on Sustainable Open Spaces. The event featured notable speakers, including Professor Catherine Pickering from Griffith University, Desiree McLean from the City of Gold Coast, Tobias Volbert from Urban Play, and Justin Edwards from Kompan. The forum delved into the rich biodiversity of the Gold Coast's ecosystems and the efforts by the City of Gold Coast to protect them. We also discussed sustainability in play spaces and how designers and suppliers work together to create well-designed sustainable play environments for our communities.

PLA QLD collaborated with the sports tech team at the Department of Tourism, Innovation, and Sport to organise two webinars. One webinar showcased advanced sports technologies from Queensland companies gaining global attention, while the other provided insights from the Australian Sports Technology Network. Both webinars were well-attended and offered valuable information on market offerings and how these technologies can support all levels of sport.

After the Sustainable Open Spaces forum, we invited Professor Pickering to lead a webinar on balancing active recreation and conservation, specifically focusing on mountain biking. This event attracted over 100 participants from across Australia eager to learn about Griffith University's research. The topic sparked considerable thought and lively discussion, prompting us to include it in the QLD Regional Conference for deeper exploration and comprehension of the research and its impacts.

In November, we collaborated with PLA NSW, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and Atlantis Liquid Dynamics to organise the Aquatics Forum. The event occurred at Victoria Park, Barrambin, and included a diverse group of expert speakers who shared their knowledge on design, community engagement, collaboration, and the latest technologies impacting the aquatics industry. The forum provided valuable insights that could be pivotal in shaping a Local Government's Aquatics strategy.

In March, we again partnered with the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) for the 2024 Parks Forum. This year's event coincided with International Women's Day, and it celebrated inspirational women in the Parks, Leisure, and Built Environment sectors. Around 100 people attended the forum, which offered valuable leadership insights from individuals at different career stages.

We teamed up with SportENG and Green by Nature to organise a webinar on sports field design and maintenance. The webinar featured top experts sharing their insights on key considerations for design and maintenance while emphasising the importance of including maintenance planning during the design phase. The webinar received positive feedback and was highly engaging. Many local government representatives found it valuable, as it helped them shape their future open space planning strategies.

In May, we attended the 2024 QLD Regional Conference and Awards of Excellence in Mooloolaba on the Sunshine Coast. The event was a success, with 118 delegates participating, who also had the opportunity to explore the Mooloolaba foreshore and surrounding areas. The conference featured a single stream of sessions, an informal awards ceremony, a breakfast with a keynote "in conversation" speaker, and two technical tours showcasing the development of the Mooloolaba foreshore and the Sunshine Coast Stadium and sporting precincts in preparation for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

QLD REGIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

Participants travelled from various parts of the Sunshine State, ranging from the northwest region of Mount Isa through the Central Highlands to coastal areas such as Mackay, Rockhampton, and Bundaberg. They also came from Toowoomba, Ipswich, and extended to the Sunshine Coast, Redlands, Brisbane, and the Gold Coast. The event began with a captivating "Welcome to Country" from Udjee Tais, an Undumbi Family Elder of the Kabi Kabi nation. This set a reflective tone for the following two days of discussions.

At the beginning of the conference, we held the QLD Regional Awards of Excellence on the first evening. We were honoured to have Australian Wheelchair Rugby legend and local Sunshine Coast resident Ryley Batt as a speaker. He provided an insightful look into the intense world of wheelchair rugby as he prepares for his sixth Paralympic Games. His talk captivated everyone in attendance, who will undoubtedly support the Aussie Steelers in Paris this year.

The next day, Green by Nature sponsored the conference breakfast. Sarah Chalkley from Sunshine Coast Council spoke about place-based design prioritising people and the environment. She showcased their "yellow design book," highlighting opportunities for other Australian Councils to adopt similar practices for healthier, more connected communities.

Our technical tour took us to the Mooloolaba Foreshore, where Sasha Tieleman from Play Design Group guided us through its various iconic areas that are currently being redeveloped. We concluded our visit at the Sunshine Coast Stadium, where we had the opportunity to explore the venue and learn about the ongoing sports facility developments for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Sunshine Coast is poised to set a high standard for future PLA QLD conferences!

In the upcoming year, we will say goodbye to our Executive Officer, Sally Jarvis, after an eventful two-year tenure. I sincerely thank her for contributing to Parks and Leisure Australia, especially in Queensland. Sally's professionalism, creativity, industry contacts, and collaborative spirit have been invaluable, leaving us with many great achievements. The entire Regional Council will miss her, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

I am looking forward to our region hosting the 2024 PLA National Conference and welcoming new members throughout the year. I am excited about the opportunities for professional development, networking, and celebrating with the 'people behind the places' in Queensland.

Photos from top to bottom:

- Tony Butler interviewing Paralympian Ryley Batt.
- Award winners of the Community Based Initiative of the Year Award at the QLD Region Awards of Excellence 2024.
- Award Winners of the QLD Region Awards of Excellence 2024.
- Conference delegates enjoying the QLD Region Awards of Excellence 2024.
- Jarrod Hill, CEO SportENG presenting on sports field design.
- Rob Woodhouse CEO Swimming Australia presenting on the 'future of the 50m pool'.





Simon James
President NSW / ACT

NSW/ACT REGIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

As we reflect on the year just passed, NSW/ACT is proud to see growth. We are growing in our advocacy for our members and the broader industry, growing in our connection to the communities and fields we are involved in, and growing our partnerships.

Our annual NSW/ACT Conference for 2024 "CONNECT" in Campbelltown, Sydney was a massive success with 159 conference registrations and a large trade show with over 24 stalls. The Conference kicked off with a very successful Arboriculture Masterclass "all about trees". Seventy-one participants spent the day delving into the value and management of trees.

Over the next two days, participants enjoyed two plenary sessions presented by well-known speakers Costa Georgiadis and Jerry Colby Williams, who not only spoke about gardens and gardening but also spoke about wellbeing, sustainability, inclusivity, keeping good records and encouraged us all to look upstream to solve problems and to design for the future. The streams sessions incorporated over forty-two presentations across three streams:

1. Parks + Gardens
2. Sports + Leisure + Aquatics
3. Social + Play + Wellbeing.

The NSW/ACT Awards of Excellence were also celebrated at the conference with over 160 in attendance. We had a high standard of nominations and some excellent winners. We are so excited to see our region grow in its achievements and the manner in which our members are contributing to healthier and active communities.

We've had some great events this year, such as playground tours with sponsors, tours of new facilities such as the Parramatta Aquatic Centre, International Women's Day with AFL, and many more.

We've also been able to take partnerships with some fantastic organisations to a new level by opening further opportunities to our members via partner events, such as The Landscape Association with their Landscape Expo, and Outdoors NSW/ACT with their Mountain Biking Symposium. We can't wait to see what other partnerships form over the next year.

We had an excellent Region Council this year, who were so dedicated to keeping our region growing. A big thank you to Mark Taylor (vice-president), Fiona MacColl (vice-president), John Siemon (treasurer), Les Munn, Fiona Tucker, Debbie Sibbick, Tony Duffy, Ian McAlister, Brad Billet, Heather Nesbitt, Abinaya Rajavelu (generate), Mark Bruhn (co-opted).

Thank you to our generous region sponsors: SPORTENG, BlueFit, AFL NSW/ACT, and Atlantis Liquid Dynamics for their support, we can't achieve what we do without them.

We look forward to 2025, with a combined NSW/ACT & QLD Conference and some fantastic training opportunities already being planned.



“We’ve also been able to take partnerships with some fantastic organisations to a new level by opening further opportunities to our members.

We can’t wait to see what other partnerships form over the next year.”

- Simon James
NSW/ACT President



- PHOTO BY KAROL CHOMKA



Hayley Ashworth
President SA/NT

SA/NT REGIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

As my first year as President of Parks and Leisure SA/NT, I am delighted to present our annual report. This year has been one of growth, change, and exciting developments for our Region and I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved and excited about what comes next.

Regional Council Changes

Firstly, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our outgoing Regional Council members. Kevin Lowe, Bob Fleming, Jason Taylor and Annie Charlton who have all stepped down from Regional Council this year. I would like to take a moment to personally thank our previous President Kevin Lowe, for his invaluable knowledge, guidance and expertise.

Additionally, I would like to thank Bob Fleming for his years of dedicated service as our only representative from the Northern Territory, and express my appreciation to Annie Charlton, our former Vice President, who stepped down to spend time with her growing family. Her's and Jason's significant contributions, particularly in conference planning, have left a lasting impact on our group. Their dedication, expertise, and contributions have been invaluable in shaping PLA SA/NT. We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

We are thrilled to welcome new faces to our Regional Council. Clare Black from Darwin City Council has joined our team, bringing her fresh perspectives and knowledge of our Northern Territory members. We have also welcomed Alex Giakoumis from iugo, Matthew Sexton from Adelaide City Council and Monina Gilbey from Glenelg Golf Club. Their contributions have already proven invaluable.

Events and Professional Development

Our 2023-2024 calendar was light on however the events we did hold were huge successes. The highlight of our year was undoubtedly the PLA SA/NT State Conference and Awards of Excellence held on May 9, 2024, at the National Wine Centre in Adelaide.

The conference, centered around the theme of Inclusive Facilities and Places, featured Former Australian Tennis Player Rodger Rasheed and former Paralympian Blake Cochrane as our keynote speakers. We were also fortunate enough to have Commonwealth Games Gold Medalist, Jessica Stenson as our guest speaker for the Awards night.

We held our first series of webinars in partnership with Kelledy Jones Lawyers, which were well-attended and received excellent feedback from our members. Our Playspace tour held in conjunction with Kompan was a sold-out success and our annual Christmas Gathering, featuring Bruce Djite as a special guest speaker was a great way to end the calendar year.

Executive Officer Transition

I would like to thank Danielle Gevers for her service as our Executive Officer for the past two years. Her dedication and hard work was instrumental in our Conference and Awards nights successes. We are excited to now welcome Dan Ferguson as our new Executive Officer. Dan will bring his experience in the Vic/Tas role over to SA/NT focusing on setting us up for future success in areas such as sponsorship, membership, event promotion, and assisting with annual planning.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, our priorities include developing ongoing regional sponsorship agreements, expanding our presence in the Northern Territory, and continuing to offer valuable professional development opportunities to our members. We are committed to building on our successes and addressing challenges, such as improving our financial position and increasing event attendance. In conclusion, I would like to thank our members, sponsors, and partners for their continued support. Your engagement and participation are the driving force behind our region. I look forward to another year of growth, learning, and community building in the parks and leisure sector across South Australia and the Northern Territory.

SA/NT REGIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

Photos from top to bottom:

- SA/NT Region Council
- Kevin Lowe (former SA/NT President) interviewing Bruce Djite (Property Council of Australia)
- Jess Stenson and Steph Frick at the SA/NT Region Awards of Excellence 2024.
- Play space tour
- Roger Rasheed, Founder of Roger Rasheed Sports Foundation

“I would like to thank our members, sponsors, and partners for their continued support. Your engagement and participation are the driving force behind our region.”





Rachel Thorpe
President VIC/TAS

VIC/TAS REGIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

Looking back on the past year, it's remarkable to see the breadth of our achievements and the impact we've had. I am extremely proud of our achievements and impacts in the parks and leisure sector in Victoria and Tasmania over the past year. The past year has seen incredible progress, engagement, and leadership for our members and sector.

Building Capacity and Capability

Our events and activities have advanced professional standards and promoted sector collaboration this year, with over 1,100 attendees participating in various events throughout the year, with over 56% of them women, reflecting our commitment to diversity. With workshops, seminars, and webinars, we keep our members abreast of industry trends and leading practices, including:

- Lark Industries and National Ageing Research Institute: Seniors Exercise Parks
- Tasmania Sector Seminars were held in Launceston and Hobart. Our speakers included Active Tasmania, SPORTENG, The Baker Group, and the AFL
- Outdoors Victoria hosted two forums with Tim Gill on active spaces for youth
- The ever-popular Leadership Program
- As part of Parks Week, we hosted a Parks Forum exploring La Trobe Sports Park's design and development
- The Playspace Award Bus Tour explored our 2024 Playspace Award nominees in collaboration with Lark Industries.

As part of our commitment to providing FREE online webinars for members, we have hosted several webinars on 'Industry Talk' topics, including Urban Forest Strategy, BMX and MTB Strategy, Data in the Park, Innovative Engagement with CaLD, Westerfield Drive Sensory Playspace, Growing Natural Turf from Recycled Sand, Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre, and managing fire risks in our urban reserves.

Our 'Rec+ Research' webinars were back, bringing academic research to practitioners.

Many thanks to those who joined us for the Open Space Planners Network relaunch and supported the Melbourne Park Managers Forum through online and in-person events.

Celebrating Excellence

Professionals from across the region gathered at Marvel Stadium for keynote speakers, panels, and interactive sessions, including a stadium tour and welcome reception. We honoured our outstanding achievements by individuals and organisations at the Awards of Excellence. Thank you to Christie Barbecues, as well as each award category sponsor and congratulations to all nominees and winners and good luck to our national finalist!

Partners in Our Journey

We are thrilled to announce the extension of our region partnership agreement with both Green by Nature and SPORTENG for another year, a renewed partnership means a shared commitment and vision for the future.

Championing Our Cause

This year, we have focused heavily on advocating for our members' interests with policymakers and stakeholders. A review of the Outdoor Fitness Equipment Guidelines was led by us with funding from Sport and Recreation Victoria. Various campaigns and initiatives have advocated for increased investment and support in our sector, highlighting the value of parks and leisure in contributing to community wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion.

A Team Effort

None of these achievements would have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our regional council members. Their passion, expertise, and commitment have been the driving force behind our success. I extend my deepest gratitude to each council member for their invaluable contributions. It is their collaborative effort that has enabled us to achieve our goals and set new benchmarks for the future.

Building on Our Success

As we look ahead, we are excited about the opportunities and challenges that lie before us. We remain committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and innovative parks and leisure sector. Our focus will continue to be on delivering high-quality professional development opportunities, advocating for our sector, and celebrating the achievements of our members.

Photos from top to bottom:

- Alicia McKay Keynote Speaker
- VIC/TAS Leadership Program 2024
- VIC/TAS Region Council



Championing Our Cause:

This year, we have focused heavily on advocating for our members' interests with policymakers and stakeholders.

Various campaigns and initiatives have advocated for increased investment and support in our sector, highlighting the value of parks and leisure in contributing to community wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion.”





DR. John Tower
Chair, PLA Advisory

PLA ADVISORY REPORT

The 2023 – 2024 year has been a period of consolidation for the Advisory team. Advisory has a stable membership with a good spread of new members and the stalwarts from Advisory's inception. Advisory's dedicated volunteers are Neal Ames, Cathy Kiss, Wendy Holland, Anand Pillay, John Senior, Steph McCallum-Keily, Lucilla Marshall, John Tower (Chair), and Laura Shaw, who joined Advisory in April 2024. It is pleasing to report that PLA Advisory is maintaining gender equity with our membership.

Advisory reflected on its past activities at the 2023 Adelaide Conference and had a new direction endorsed at the PLA Board's December 2023 meeting. Advisory has categorised its initiatives into Advocacy, Collaboration, and Knowledge & Research. Advisory has also broadened its attention to focus on PLA stakeholders to include National Board, National Office, Regional Councils and Generate Network and ultimately working across the PLA member network as well as the broader park and leisure sector.

Our Achievements

PLA Advisory's contributions include preparing position papers on critical issues, initiating research and advocating for the benefit of the PLA members and our overall industry. The following list itemises Advisory's activities.

Advocacy

Adelaide Statement & Pledge Commentaries – Advisory collaborated with World Urban Parks, Green Adelaide, and PLA members to prepare the Adelaide Statement. The Statement was endorsed at the 2023 International Congress. Since the Statement's endorsement Advisory has:

- Prepared Adelaide Statement Pledge Commentaries that were distributed via the monthly PLA News. Copies of the Adelaide Statement and Commentaries are available from <https://parksleisure.com.au/adelaide-statement/>.
- Included the Adelaide Statement and Pledge Commentaries as a poster at the Vic/Tas Regional Conference.
- Conducted an Adelaide Statement and Pledge Commentaries session at the NSW / ACT Regional Conference.
- Australian Sport Commission Act Review – Advisory submitted a proposal to update the Australian Sport Commission Act 1989.
- Liaised with Regional Council Executive Officers and engaged with the PLA Regions to be better informed and share Advisory's insights about critical issues.

- Engaged with National Office and PaRC Inc. to support the Park and Recreation Collection (PaRC) and further develop this valuable resource.
- Contributed to the Australian Sport Commission National Sport Research Advisory Group activities.

Projects

Global issues – increasing costs of construction impact. Advisory completed preliminary preparation to deliver a workshop on this topic at the 2024 National Conference.

Park & leisure and university collaboration project – Advisory conducted a workshop on this topic at the 2023 International Congress. Advisory has continued this project's development via:

Establishment of a working group to guide the project's development with the intention to provide resources to stakeholders interested to establish better collaboration.

Conducted sessions on this topic at the Vic / Tas and NSW / ACT regional conferences.

PLA Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – Advisory prepared a statement endorsed by PLA Board regarding PLA's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. A recommendation from this project was for PLA to pursue a Reconciliation Action Plan.

Research and Knowledge Initiatives

- Preparation of the Research Connections section of PLA's Journal.
- Provision of a quarterly Advisory article for PLA's Journal.
- Regular contributions to the monthly PLA News emails.
- Contribution to the National Office's conduct of the PLA Members Survey.
- Clearinghouse of Sport liaison.
- Contributions to the delivery of the 2024 National Conference.

“

We are excited about advertising for new members of PLA Advisory within the next 6 months. Our new recruits will broaden our reach across Australia and across our diverse industry.”

Priorities for next year

PLA Advisory is dedicated to contribute as PLA's critical analysis and discussion forum. Our newest priority is to provide guidance about how to cope with the increasing costs of building and maintaining park and leisure infrastructure. This initiative is a direct outcome for the 2023 Global Issues Impact Report. We will also continue to pursue the other projects listed above, e.g., park & leisure and university collaboration project and Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Advisory will continue to collaborate with PLA Regions, Generate Network, National Office and PLA Board to make sure we are aware of issues and contributing our expertise when possible. We will also attempt to be more engaged with the Regional Conferences to contribute our insights and listen to members' needs and issues. We will use this collaboration to guide Advisory's activities and contribute to the park and leisure sector's development.

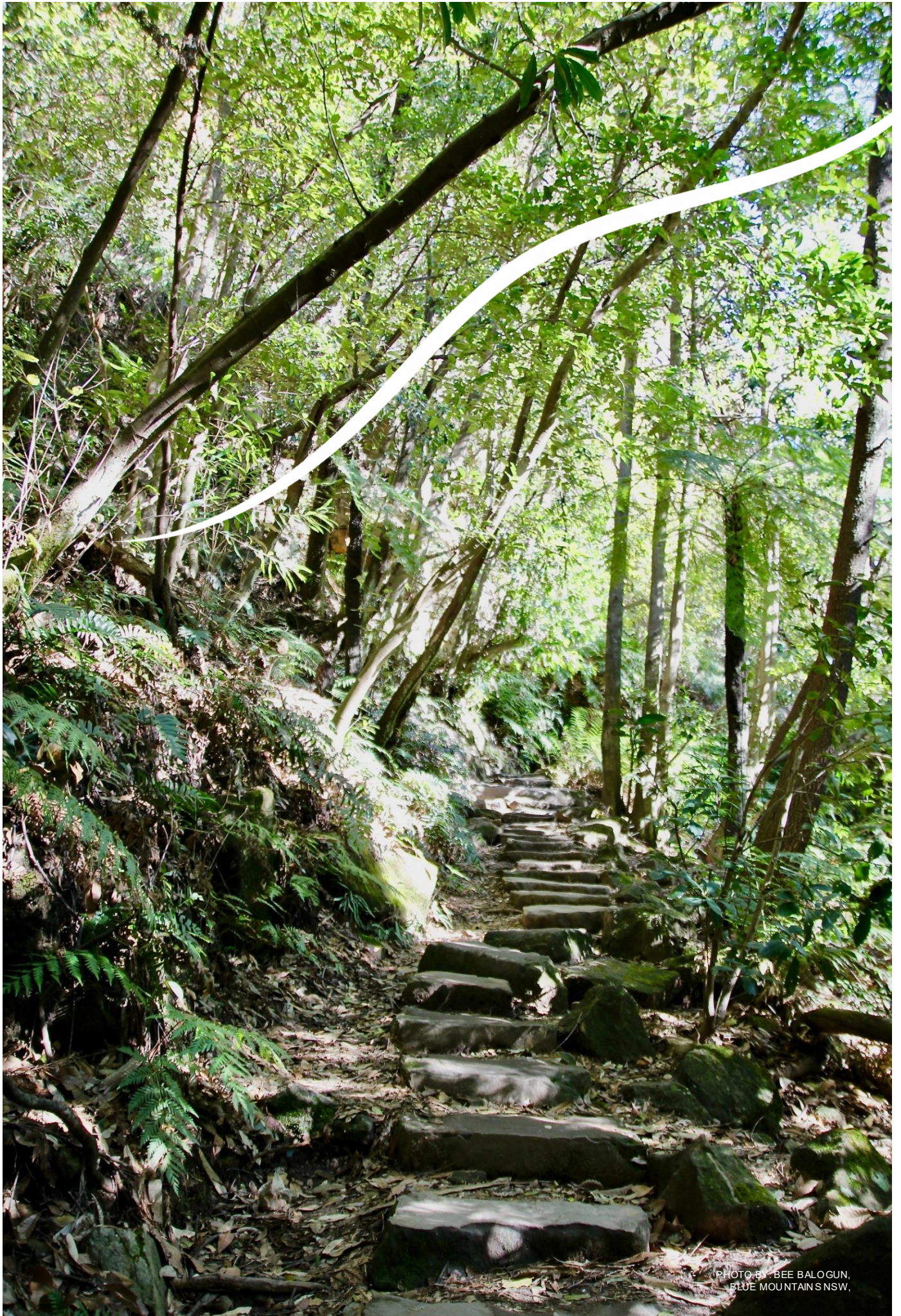


PHOTO BY: BEE BALOGUN,
BLUE MOUNTAINS NSW,



Kristin Davies
Vice President
National Board Parks and
Leisure Australia

Membership Report

Parks and Leisure Australia exists to represent, advocate, support, connect and empower our members, stakeholders and the wider industry involved in parks, leisure, recreation, sport, open space, community places and the environment. We are the sum of all our parts across the regions and all the sectors that make up our wonderful industry.

Parks and Leisure Australia recorded a 4% increase in membership in 2023/24 with a total of 3,043 members for the year, an additional 119 members on last year's position, and we look forward to continued growth in 2024/25.

Our strong commitment to gender equity remains and we are seeing greater representation of women across the membership profile with approximately 43% of all members being female, (56% male and 1% not stated) and improvement on the previous year.

Our new professional and emerging leader cohort is sustaining with 172 members affiliated with the Generate network and the transition through the this into PLA full memberships is coming through. The program also celebrated its first pathway from Generate to Executive with two Generate alumni being appointed to the PLA National Board. The integration of emerging leaders into events, programs and industry volunteering is also increasing with participation on Advisory and other region Council's in most states.

The PLA Towards 2025 Strategic Plan is being implemented with a strong focus on Membership and Member Services and a commitment to better understanding member needs and responding with diverse and valued services.

Parks and Leisure Australia conducted a member survey in March and April 2024. The aim was to gather responses from members and identify key statistics in membership satisfaction, engagement levels, barriers to engagement and industry challenges. The purpose of these statistics is to find focus points for strategic planning moving forward.

A total of 148 members responded to the survey over the duration of the period, which gave a response rate of approximately 5%, an increase on last year.

The survey results indicate an overall positive satisfaction of PLA membership with an average rating of 7.39 out of 10 (satisfaction score).

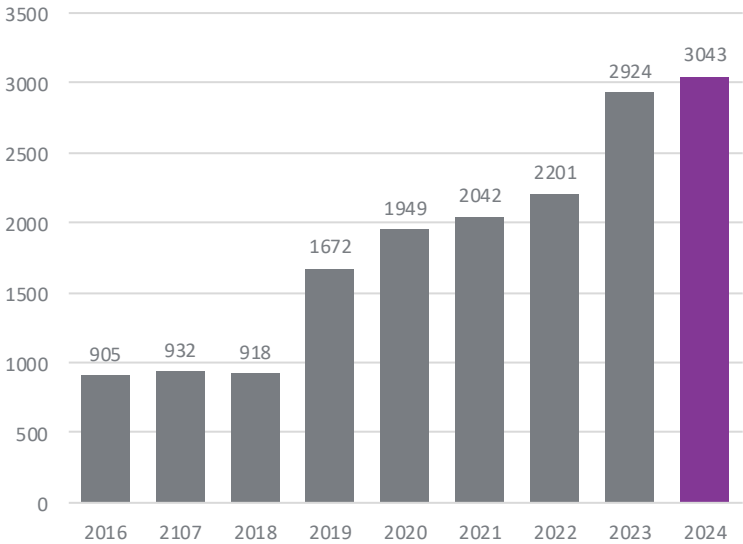
75% (112) of responses were in the 7-10 range indicating a significant portion of members find value in their membership benefits.

5% (7) of responses were in the 0-4 rating, highlighting there is still room for improvement to increase membership benefits.

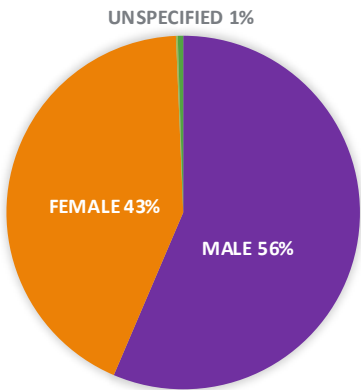
A summary of findings is provided over the page.

“We would like to thank our members for their continued support and for the role our members and volunteers play in supporting and promoting the values of PLA throughout the industry.”

Change in Membership (2016 – 2024)

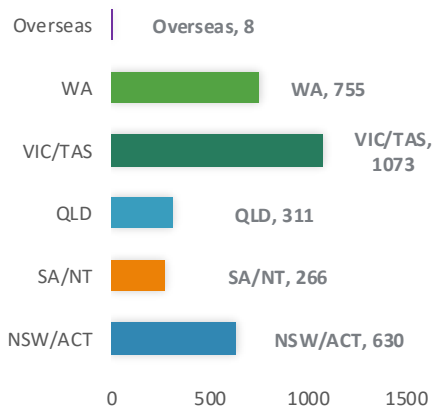


Members by Region and Gender (2023/24)



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership by Region (2024)



Improve Membership Services:

While satisfaction with PLA events is generally positive, there are notable areas needing improvement. Members have highlighted a demand for more rural events and expressed low satisfaction with features like the jobs board, PaRC library, and AP&L Journal. To enhance perceived membership value, PLA should address these weaknesses and introduce new, relevant services.

2. Increase Event Accessibility:

Time, location, and budget constraints are significant barriers to member participation in PLA activities. To overcome these obstacles, PLA should increase rural events and invest in recording and streaming activities for broader access. This approach would allow members to engage with resources at their convenience. Additionally, reviewing event pricing and offering discounts could enhance membership attractiveness and attendance.

3. Target Local Governments and Businesses:

Statistical analysis indicates that corporate accounts contribute significantly to membership numbers. PLA should focus on attracting local councils and businesses not currently enrolled, maximizing potential membership growth and enhancing the organisation’s reach.

4. Prioritise Membership Engagement:

The survey shows that members are mostly active and engage with PLA monthly. To maintain this engagement, PLA should enhance its services and utilise targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness about membership features. Encouraging corporate members to access their accounts will also increase resource utilisation.

5. Create More Member Connections:

Members desire greater opportunities to connect with the industry at a national level. Implementing an online forum could facilitate discussions and strengthen community ties, encouraging further member engagement and collaboration.

6. Focus on Communication Channels:

Members prefer emails and E-Newsletters for updates over social media and other platforms. PLA should tailor content to include industry news, event information, and improved membership features. While social media isn’t favoured, maintaining a presence can enhance brand awareness.

7. Continue Event Variety:

Members appreciate the diversity of PLA activities. Maintaining and expanding this variety is essential, with a focus on improving workshops and training sessions. Developing a long-term event schedule that includes both national and regional activities will ensure relevant content and increased member satisfaction.

8. Provide Professional Development Opportunities:

Skill shortages pose a significant challenge in the industry. PLA can address this by enhancing the CPLP program and raising awareness of professional certification opportunities. Identifying skill gaps through industry research will enable PLA to offer targeted training sessions, benefiting both members and the organisation.

9. Enhance Advocacy and Strategic Vision:

Increased advocacy and stakeholder engagement are crucial for addressing industry challenges. PLA should conduct more industry research to educate members and actively engage with State and Federal Governments to address pressing issues. Demonstrating a strategic vision aligned with member needs will reinforce PLA’s role as the peak body in the industry.

By focusing on these key areas, Parks and Leisure Australia will continue to enhance member satisfaction and engagement, ultimately strengthening its position within the industry.

KAKADU, NORTHERN TERRITORY
PHOTO BY NICK DUNN



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