

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN BOARD OF WORKS

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Board's reference:

30 June 1982

MELBOURNE'S METROPOLITAN PARKS

CONCEPT

In 1971 during a comprehensive review of its Metropolitan Planning Policies, the Board set land aside in six major open space reservations.

In June 1973, the MMBW accepted the financial responsibility for the development of a Metropolitan Park System based on five of the six major open space reservations. This decision was designed to provide land and facilities for recreational opportunities, mainly of a regional nature, the provision of which would be generally beyond the resources of the local municipalities.

The setting up of the parks is a tangible example of planning to cater for both our current and future recreational needs and to contribute to an environmental heritage of which all Melbournians can be proud.

PARK AREAS

• Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park (YVMP)

About 1 432 ha containing the flood plain and many adjacent valley slopes of the Yarra between Burke Road, Kew and Pound Bend, Warrandyte.

• Maribyrnong Valley Metropolitan Park (MVMP)

Some 460 ha around the Maribyrnong River comprising the flood plain, steep valley sides and some plateau land to the south of Keilor.

. Dandenong Valley Metropolitan Park (DVMP)

An area of 1 330 ha featuring the flood plain and some adjoining slopes of the valley of Dandenong Creek between Boronia Road, Wantirna and Wellington Road, Mulgrave.

. Point Cook Metropolitan Park (PCMP)

An area of 933 ha located south west of Altona including basalt plain, beach frontage and the historic Point Cook Homestead.

. Braeside Metropolitan Park (BMP)

An area of 311 ha of heath vegetation and grassland located to the south east of Melbourne.

Of the total area of 4 466 ha proposed to be set aside as Metropolitan Park land, more than two thirds is in public ownership (3,132 ha) the Board owning or managing 2,509 ha bought at a total cost of nearly \$37 million.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the parks is to provide a diverse recreational and educational experience for people of all ages in an attractive landscape.

POLICIES

The policies adopted by the Board in 1975 were devised to assist in attaining the objective and included statements on master planning, leisure activities, education and park interpretation, landscape, farming activities, camping, access, and ranger service.

PLANNING

The first step in park management is to prepare master concept plans to ensure that the parks are developed in an orderly fashion, commensurate with funds available. The preparation of each outline plan follows a basic set of procedures:

- . Existing condition surveys including topographical, buildings, fauna and flora, noise, archaeological and soil types.

- . Assessment of landscape character and potential uses.
- . Separation of parks into areas suitable for active and passive use, linked by a combination of existing and proposed vehicular and pedestrian access, with car parks and amenities distributed at key points within the circulatory system.

The over-riding theme of each park development is the protection, preservation and the improvement of all important significant natural features.

Landscape enhancement and tree preservation are two vital elements of metropolitan parks management so as to afford maximum variation and relief from the urban scene.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To ensure a continuous input from local organisations and appropriate government departments, advisory committees have been formed for each of the parks being developed. Each of these advisory committees provides a valuable contribution to the planning and management of the parks as members include both specialist and lay representatives of local residents and municipalities.

To augment the role of the Advisory Committees, a number of public seminars or Ideas Conferences have been held at which audience participation has been encouraged. Some workshops have been held with local residents or specialist groups. Although this has been a time-consuming process, it has brought forward many ideas and reactions which have greatly assisted in the planning of the parks.

Visitor surveys have been undertaken to ascertain whether the policies adopted are meeting the needs of the citizens of Melbourne.

PARK EDUCATION/INTERPRETATION

The objectives of the Metropolitan Park interpretation/education programme are:

- . To assist the visitor in developing a keener understanding and enjoyment of the parks.
- . To accomplish management goals. Interpretation can encourage thoughtful use of the park on the part of the visitor and reinforce the idea that public spaces are special places requiring special care. Interpretation can also be used to minimise adverse impact to the park by directing people and facilities away from sensitive areas.
- . To provide public understanding of the Board's parks concept and its parks programme.
- . To provide an awareness of the role of man in the urban environment.

Currently, the primary focus of interpretation is aimed at the recreation user.

The Board also aims to encourage schools to use metropolitan parks for outdoor educational activities. Of the 1 400 schools in the metropolitan area, almost 25% are within 10 minutes bus ride of one of the parks, and about 15% are within walking distance.

As part of the interpretative programme the Board is building visitor centres which contain ranger headquarters, meeting rooms and display areas. Interpretative techniques will include indoor displays, audio-visual programmes, brochures, outdoor signs, nature trails, and talks and guided walks by park staff.