MELBOURNE'S OPEN SPACE

Our garden city

Imagine Melbourne without its parks and bushlands: no gardens to stroll through, nowhere to play football, no local playgrounds, no natural areas to explore. So much of Melbourne's character relies on the beauty and abundance of these 'open spaces' that, more than anything else, they set Melbourne apart from many other cities.

The Victorian Government's Metropolitan Open Space Plan is about the future of our great city. The first strategy since 1929 to increase and enhance Melbourne's parklands, it envisages a network of parks based on the city's waterways and coastlines. Projects that will create these green links are well underway. The vision is fast becoming reality.

The linear parklands will be a magnificent legacy for future generations of Victorians. The 1988 Plan will improve the image of our city and help attract both tourists and commerce. While Melbourne has always been well endowed with parks, they have been more accessible in some areas than in others. By creating a continuous system and upgrading the quality of the city's open space, it will be easier for all people, regardless of where they live, to enjoy our parks and waterways.

Melbourne's changing recreation needs

elbourne's open space ranges from tennis courts, golf courses and playing fields to remnant bush or degraded land adjoining creeks, and from small parks and playgrounds used by local residents to extensive tracts of land which draw visitors from afar. Whether they are metropolitan parks or local reserves, all open spaces work in different ways to fulfill the recreation needs of Melbourne's population.

The total area of open space has increased substantially in post-war years: the net amount of public open space in Melbourne continues to increase, rising from about 20,000 ha in 1976 to over 30,000 ha today. In the past six years, it has increased from 10.9 to 12.4 ha per 1,000 people.

However, community needs are diversifying. There is, for example, evidence of increasing interest in unstructured outdoor activities such as walking and cycling, and 'natural' settings. These changing preferences have been accompanied by growing environmental awareness within the community, and increased interest in indigenous landscapes, flora and fauna.

At the same time, outdoor social activities such as picnics and barbecues have maintained their traditional appeal, particularly for family groups and organisations. Working-hours are more flexible and most members of the population now have more leisure time than ever before. Some groups lack mobility because they do not own cars or are not well served by public transport. Accessible public open space will become even more valuable as the demand for medium density housing increases.

An early vision lives on

y the middle of last century, largely due to the efforts of Latrobe, Hoddle, Von Mueller, Guilfoyle and others, an extensive ring of parklands surround Melbourne's city centre. These parks included the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain, Royal Park, Princes Park, Fitzroy Gardens, Fawkner Park, and Albert Park. However, this early impetus faded after the 1880s during the rapid development of the inner and middle suburbs and few sites comparable to those in central Melbourne were reserved.

In 1929, the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission found that there was insufficient parkland in the built-up area to meet the needs of the existing population and that the provision of new parks was not systematic.

The Commission emphasised the importance of locating urban parks within walking distance of residents, recommended that a minimum of 5 acres of land for recreation and sport be provided per 1,000 population, and produced a far-sighted plan for the development of a system of parks based largely on Melbourne's waterways. Today, this idea of linear parklands is still a major force in open space planning and is the basis of the 1988 Metropolitan Open Space Plan.

The 1988 Metropolitan Open Space Plan

ith Melbourne's growth, some of the specific opportunities identified in 1929 have been lost, but there is still a chance to create an outstanding system of parkland corridors. Long-term conservation, more diverse recreation areas and creating new parks are also aims of the 1988 Plan.

Local councils, State Government departments and statutory authorities like the MMBW, are all involved in managing parklands in Melbourne. Local councils, in particular, manage more than half of this city's open space and their roles in its planning and in working directly with the community are extremely important. Community groups also play an active part in rehabilitating and looking after many open space areas. The 1988 Metropolitan Open Space Plan sets policy directions to help these agencies and groups to work together to supply Melbourne's residents with a wide range of opportunities for recreation, from competitive sports to social relaxation and play.

Long-term conservation

and in National Parks is inalienable. All other major Crown land parks and reserves (such as major inner urban parks) will be protected from alienation and their administration and development will be governed by approved management plans. Where land in such areas is required for other purposes (for example, for road widening) the proposed revocation of the land from the park or reserve will be subject to Parliamentary review.

Changes of land use in other parks which are not Crown land but are reserved in planning schemes as Public Open Space, will still be subject to planning controls and the associated public consultation processes. Any land required for other purposes will be replaced with equivalent land.

Comprehensive data bases on sites with significant nature conservation, historical and cultural value will be used for forward planning of new residential areas.

A range of recreational settings

Central Melbourne/inner suburbs

uring redevelopment projects, opportunities will be taken to increase open space in areas which are deficient in open space or strategically important, for example, Southbank, Vickers-Ruwolt and Lynch's Bridge. Future potential of the docklands and Spencer Street railyards will be investigated and significant open space will ultimately be provided to upgrade and link the lower Maribyrnong and Yarra Rivers and Moonee Ponds Creek.

A linear park will be created along the former Royal Park-to-Fitzroy railway line through transferring the required land to the Crown.

The Local Government Assistance Scheme will give high priority to the purchase of land for open space in older suburbs where many people do not have sufficient open space within walking distance.

The feasibility of establishing a tourist-oriented 'Yarra-Bay Cycle-Skateway' will be investigated. This would provide direct links between St Kilda beach, Station Pier and the central city by using the St Kilda and Port Melbourne light-rail reserves and Beaconsfield Parade.

Yarra Bend Park will be upgraded and native vegetation re-established according to a management plan.

The Government's Plan for distributing, open space in metropolitan Melbourne builds on the policy directions outlined in the State Conservation Strategy: *Protecting the Environment* and the Metropolitan Policy: *Shaping Melbourne's Future*, and will be the basis for planning and decision-making into the next century.

The major features of the 1988 Plan are:

A linear network of open space

n interconnecting parkland system will be developed, running alongside and branching out from the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers and Port Phillip Bay foreshore. A number of other waterways and linear spaces will be used to make cross-radial connections, including the Outer Circle and Royal Park-to-Fitzroy former railway reserves, the Maroondah aqueduct reserve and various pipe tracks. On the urban fringe, the network will connect with rural trails, particularly in the Dandenong Ranges and the Mornington Peninsula, and along the coast and the Werribee River.

Installing consistent signs within the linear open space system will be encouraged to raise awareness of the recreation opportunities Melbourne has to offer.

elbourne's open space will eventually provide a wider range of settings. 'Developed' urban settings will be enhanced in areas such as the lower Yarra River, Moonee Ponds Creek and the St Kilda foreshore, and new ones, such as the proposed Heatherton-Dingley chain of parks, will be created.

'Natural' and secluded areas will be preserved in outer areas and where possible in older suburbs, such as along sections of the Darebin Creek, Dandenong Creek and the Outer Circle Railway cutting in Canterbury. By planting additional native vegetation, bushland wildlife corridors will be created.

Planning in commercial centres will aim to provide parks or plazas within easy walking distance of most offices and shops.

Urban forestry will be promoted through assistance to councils and community groups, and by encouraging corporate sponsorship.

New parks and reserves

herever possible, new parks will be created in suburbs which are relatively deficient in open space or to complement existing parks. In the inner suburbs such as Brunswick, Footscray, Richmond, Prahran and Caulfield, opportunities may arise during large renewal projects.

Metropolitan parks will be developed progressively and a number of National or State Parks and conservation reserves will be expanded and enhanced through acquisition and redevelopment, and by implementing Land Conservation Council recommendations.

Surplus government land which has strategic importance for open space will be retained and used for this purpose.

Western suburbs

he following major parks will be extended:

- Maribyrnong Valley Metropolitan Park
- Point Cook Metropolitan Park (inclusion of Cheetham Salt Works)
- Organ Pipes National Park (adjoining council land will be managed as part of the Park)

Redeveloping surplus railway land and the old fort site at Point Gellibrand will make it more useful for recreation. Historic features such as the Timeball Tower will be highlighted.

Major links in the metropolitan trail network will include the Maribyrnong and Werribee Rivers, Kororoit and Skeleton Creeks, the coast between Williamstown and Werribee and the Western Outfall Sewer Reserve.

Environmental improvements such as landscaping and tree planting will continue in the western suburbs.

Management plans will be prepared for the Derrimut Grasslands Conservation Reserve and the Western Wetlands.

Further information

opies of the 1988 Metropolitan Open Space Plan are available from:

The Ministry for Planning and Environment Bookshop
477 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000
Tel: (03) 628 5111

The Victorian Government Information Centre
318 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne 3000
Tel: (03) 663 3760

MPE Metropolitan Offices
Eastern and Upper Yarra
Suite 4, 38 Prospect Street, Box Hill 3128
Tel: (03) 899 0182

Southern and Westernport
33-39 High Street, Cranbourne 3977
Tel: (059) 96 3377

Victoria Archaeological Survey
29-31 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park 3206
Tel: (03) 69 0522

Local libraries in the metropolitan area also have copies for public use.

If you would like more information about details of the 1988 Metropolitan Open Space Plan, contact Rhonda Boyle (Tel: 628 5487) or Colin Leigh (Tel: 628 5460) at the Ministry for Planning and Environment.

Jean Gordon Government Printer Melbourne

Eastern suburbs

urther extensions will be made to:

- Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park
- Dandenong Valley Metropolitan Park
- Dandenong Ranges National Park
- Warrandyte State Park

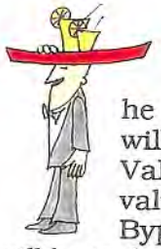
The Outer Circle Linear Park will be created along the former Outer Circle railway reserve between the Chandler Highway (Kew) and Hughesdale station.

A linear park will be created along the former Lilydale-to-Warburton railway line. Development of a regional trail system within the Upper Yarra and Dandenong Ranges area will be investigated.

Wattle Park will be upgraded and a management plan prepared. The historical association with the Tramways Board will be preserved and future management arrangements investigated.

Major links in the metropolitan trail network will include the Yarra River, the Outer Circle and Lilydale to Warburton rail reserves, Gardiners, Koonung, Mullum Mullum and Dandenong Creeks, and various pipetracks.

Northern suburbs



he Plenty Gorge Metropolitan Park will be developed along the Plenty Valley. Land of high environmental value between the Greensborough Bypass Road and Bridge Inn Road will be included in the park or set aside as other public open space.

Further additions will be made to Gellibrand Hill Park and Kinglake National Park.

Area improvements such as landscaping, tree planting and urban forestry will be undertaken throughout the northern suburbs.

Major links in the metropolitan trail network will include the Moonee Ponds, Merri, Darebin, and Diamond Creeks, Plenty River and Maroondah aqueduct reserve.

Southern suburbs

ajor new parks to be developed include:

- Braeside Metropolitan Park
- Heatherton-Dingley Chain of Parks
- Cranbourne Botanic Gardens
- Point Nepean National Park

The following parks will be extended:

- Dandenong Valley Metropolitan Park
- Nepean State Park (addition of Green's Bush)

A link will also be created between Lysterfield Lake Park and Churchill National Park.

The "Two Bays" walking track between Dromana and Bushranger Bay will be completed. Creation of a link between Lysterfield Lake Park and Birds Land Reserve will be investigated. Development of a regional trail system on the Mornington Peninsula will also be investigated.

Management plans will be prepared for the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands and the Pines reserve in Frankston.

Exisitng

Proposed parkland

Everyone can take part

Direct community involvement in management and maintenance is essential to make the most of Melbourne's parks and waterways. Already, many voluntary groups undertake valuable work which is beyond the resources of park management agencies, for example, in the rehabilitation of the Organ Pipes National Park and along the Darebin and Merri Creeks.

Many local councils welcome the involvement of community groups in local parklands. Some government agencies, such as the MMBW and the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands, provide assistance to communities starting "Friends of Parks" groups.

Help make Melbourne even more beautiful and livable: see how you can get involved in recreation projects in your area.