

HEALTHY PARKS HEALTHY PEOPLE FRAMEWORK 2020





About the Framework

Based on strong evidence and generations of traditional knowledge, Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPHP) has become a global movement that showcases the connection between healthy environments and positive human health and wellbeing. Building on Parks Victoria's leadership role in the HPHP movement, this Framework guides Parks Victoria's priorities for implementing HPHP through policy, programs and partnerships.

The HPHP Framework is driven by Victorian Government policy that recognises the many health and environmental stewardship benefits of being active in the outdoors and connecting with parks and nature. It highlights the critical role that Victoria's parks can play in encouraging a healthier, more livable and more connected community.

The Framework outlines five strategic priorities for HPHP that will benefit Victorians across all life stages: healthy places and settings for all; mutually beneficial program partnerships; quality information and evidence; leadership and advocacy; and workplaces that promote wellbeing.

Victoria's parks contribute to public health both by providing suitable settings and services that support everyday contact with parks through recreation, education and volunteering, as well as provide settings that support outdoor healthcare. The Framework highlights the importance of partnerships and collaborations that help target specific populations to become more active and connected to nature. These include: children and youth; urban and regional communities that have higher levels of physical inactivity and suffer from health inequalities and disadvantage; people from diverse cultural backgrounds; encouraging families to be more active in nature; building opportunities for healthy and active ageing of seniors and; connecting Traditional Owners to Country for positive cultural, physical and mental wellbeing.

The HPHP Framework provides context and directions for HPHP to inform Parks Victoria staff, Traditional Owners, existing and potential partners and collaborators and the public.

Healthy Parks Healthy People

Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPHP) has grown from being a successful marketing tagline, created by Parks Victoria in 2000, to become a global movement that highlights the fundamental connection between environmental health and human health and wellbeing.

Healthy parks sustain our life and liveability. They nurture healthy ecosystems and provide many essential services on which we rely, such as clean water and air, climate regulation, pollination of crops and coastal protection. Parks also play a critical role in our physical, mental, spiritual and social health and enrich our lives through connection with cultural heritage and a sense of place. They also generate valuable economic wellbeing through income and jobs.

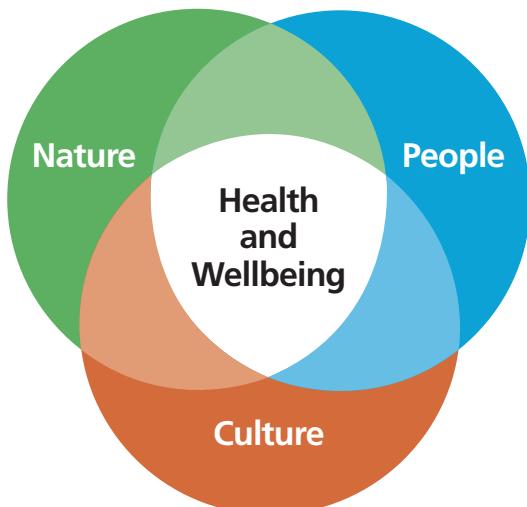
By experiencing, understanding and benefiting from connecting with parks, people advocate, care, invest in, and act for the health of parks.

The notion that nature and parks are good for our health and wellbeing is not new. HPHP can be viewed as a re-invigoration of traditional knowledge that our Aboriginal communities have applied for many generations – that if you care for your Country, your Country cares for you.

For Parks Victoria, Healthy Parks Healthy People is the foundation of how we manage parks, based on four key principles:

1. The wellbeing of all societies depends on healthy ecosystems
2. Parks nurture healthy ecosystems
3. Contact with nature is essential for improving emotional, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing
4. Parks are fundamental to economic growth and to vibrant and healthy communities

Victoria's parks provide a rich and diverse range of settings, from urban to remote, that can play an increasing role as critical community assets for providing positive public health and wellbeing.



Nature is good medicine: the evidence

Over the past decade, based on a strong and growing body of evidence, there has been a revolution in understanding the importance of nature and greenspaces for our mind, body and soul.

Unprecedented social and environmental changes pose growing risks to people's health and wellbeing with increasing urbanisation and changing lifestyles resulting in more people spending less time in nature, doing less physical activity, reporting higher levels of stress and feelings of being more socially isolated. In just one generation, outdoor play time for children has more than halved.

We now know that many of our lifestyle-based health conditions can be prevented or moderated through healthy, active lifestyles. Participation in regular physical activity, a healthy diet and reducing stress are evidence-based approaches that can contribute to positive health and wellbeing outcomes. There is also strong evidence that time spent in nature builds stronger connection to nature, creating greater awareness and positive stewardship behaviours.

Nature-based health and wellbeing benefits

- Blood pressure ↓
- Stress hormones ↓
- Heart rate ↓
- Mood ↑
- Cognitive function ↑
- Quality of life ↑
- Physical recovery ↑
- Immune system ↑
- Musculoskeletal strength ↑
- Environmental stewardship ↑
- Social and community connection ↑

Policy context

Victoria's parks play an important role in contributing to Victorian State Government strategies for promoting community health and wellbeing and connection to nature.

The HPHP Framework directly contributes to outcomes for *Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2037*¹ and the *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-23*² and is underpinned by the Victorian Memorandum for Health and Nature³, a statement signed by the Ministers for Health and Human Services and Energy, Environment and Climate Change to provide drive stronger connections between environment and health policy, knowledge and programs.

Protecting Victoria's Environment: Biodiversity 2037	<p>Goal One: 'Victorians Value Nature'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase opportunities for all Victorians to have daily connections with nature.• Increase opportunities for all Victorians to act to protect biodiversity. <p>Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Nature is good medicine': helping Victorians take advantage of the many health and human development benefits of connecting to nature.• 'Steps into Nature': Helping Victorians take steps into nature and explore the wonders of Victoria's biodiversity.
Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing active living• Improving mental wellbeing• Tackling climate change and its impact on health• Increasing healthy eating <p><i>"Encouraging (physical) activity to occur in natural environments (including parks) can increase people's connection with nature and catalyse actions to conserve and protect our natural environments".</i></p>
Other relevant policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety strategic plan 2017-2027• Active Victoria - A strategic framework for sport and recreation in Victoria 2017-2021• Victorian Government Healthy Choices Guidelines

In contributing to Government policies, HPHP is recognised within Parks Victoria's Statement of Obligations under the Parks Victoria Act: '*Healthy Parks Healthy People, which recognises the fundamental connections between human health and environmental health, is an underlying philosophy of Parks Victoria.*'

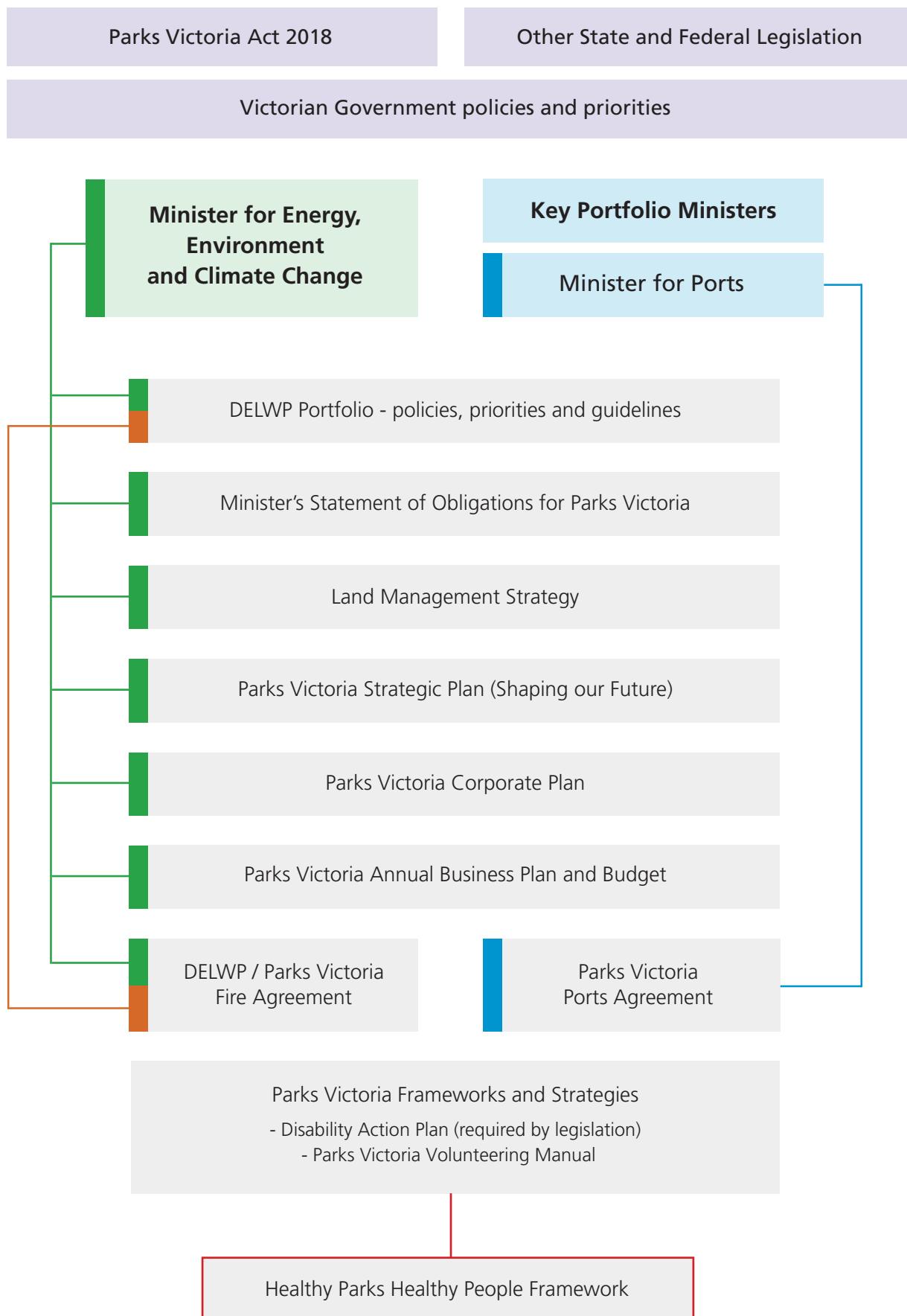
Appendix 1 summarises the legislative context for HPHP.

1 <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-plan>

2 <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/victorian-public-health-wellbeing-plan-2019-2023>

3 <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorian-memorandum-for-health-and-nature>

Parks Victoria's Operating Environment



Community wellbeing benefits of parks

Our parks are critical 'green infrastructure' that contribute a wide range of services and benefits to both the State's wellbeing and the health and wellbeing of individuals.

Individual health and wellbeing benefits	Social and economic benefits	Environmental benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Positive physical healthPositive mental health through reduced stress and improved moodImproved cognitive functionImproved recovery from physical and mental injuryConnection to place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improved amenity, liveability and quality of lifeProvision of ecosystem services (e.g. clean water)Connection with cultural heritageSocial integration and connectionConnection to placeImproved educational outcomesJobs and income to regional and urban economiesAvoided physical and mental health costs, including reduced absenteeism and greater work productivityEmployment pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Awareness and understanding of our natural and cultural heritageSupport for conservation actionsPark stewardshipPositive environmental behavioursData collection and knowledge

Parks Victoria's role in activating HPHP

Around the world parks are becoming increasingly recognised as nature-based settings that promote positive health and wellbeing across a range of domains, from encouraging everyday contact with nature, to enabling parks as therapeutic settings.

Parks Victoria's role in HPHP is to:

- Ensure that the natural and cultural values of the parks estate are conserved and protected
- Inspire the community to visit parks for emotional, physical, social, cultural and spiritual health and wellbeing benefits and to strengthen their relationship with nature and culture
- Provide accessible, inclusive services and facilities that enable memorable experiences and positive health and wellbeing benefits
- Collaborate and partner with Traditional Owners, government and non-government organisations, and the community to enable and encourage more people to connect with, and advocate for parks

In providing services and facilities that encourage everyday participation in nature, much of this role is 'business as usual'. Taking this further, there are many emerging opportunities to partner with the health and community sectors to facilitate delivery of nature-based programs by third party service providers that get more people more active in nature, act for nature, as well as enable parks to become key settings for a variety of nature-based health interventions for target populations.

Note that Parks Victoria is not a healthcare service provider and will not provide healthcare advice other than general information on the benefits of participating in nature.

Parks as nature-based assets for positive health and wellbeing





Healthy Parks Healthy People goals

The health and wellbeing of people from all backgrounds and abilities will be enhanced through connecting to the natural and cultural values of parks at each stage of their life, leading to improved advocacy for parks.

- Parks are increasingly recognised as important nature-based health settings that contribute to improving community health and wellbeing
- Social, cultural and physical barriers to visiting parks will be reduced
- More people enjoy parks more often through being physically active
- Parks are recognised as sanctuaries for maintaining and improving mental wellbeing and social connection
- Health and community service providers will routinely engage in nature for prevention and treatment of physical and mental health conditions
- Through increased connection to parks, more active park stewards are generated and landscapes are better conserved
- New health and wellbeing tourism markets are created

Strategic priorities - Activating parks for health and wellbeing benefits

To further activate Healthy Park Healthy People across the Victorian parks network, five strategic priorities will guide the program. These are:

- Healthy places and settings for all Victorians
- Mutually beneficial program partnerships
- Quality information and evidence
- Leadership and advocacy in promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of connecting with parks
- Workplaces that promote wellbeing

These five strategic priorities are outlined in more detail on the following page.

There will be a focus on:

- Urban and regional populations that have higher levels of physical inactivity and experience greater health inequalities and disadvantage
- Nature-based opportunities for positive physical, mental and social health of children and youth
- Encouraging families to be more active in nature
- Building opportunities for healthy and active ageing of seniors and all abilities access
- Supporting Traditional Owners to connect to Country for positive cultural, physical and mental wellbeing

Healthy Parks Healthy People – Strategic Priorities

Guiding Principles

- Evidence based
- Life-stage approach
- Place-based
- Equitable and Inclusive
- Recognise climate change adaptation
- Fit for purpose for target groups
- Adaptable and scaleable
- Environmentally sustainable

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Healthy places and settings

- Sustainable natural settings and all abilities facilities that encourage and support nature play, outdoor learning, physical exercise, physical activity and recreation and social connection
- Trails and other tailored infrastructure that promote fitness and challenge
- Inspiring, reflective settings to promote positive mental health and spiritual connection

Program partnerships

- Collaborations that promote nature play, outdoor learning, physical activity and social connection
- Events and programs that promote regular participation in physical activity, resilience and positive mental health in nature
- Collaborations and partnerships that encourage nature-based therapeutic health programs
- Healthy and sustainable food and beverage choices are available in park settings
- Programs and events promoting health and wellbeing contribute to the visitor economy

APPLICATIONS

Nature play, outdoor learning and adventure

Innovative settings and program partnerships (e.g. Bush Kinder and Nature Play Groups, Outdoor education, Nature-based playscapes, and building youth resilience through adventure)

Steps into Nature

Introductory programs and events (e.g. ParkWalks, Come and Try events, Arts)

Fitness and challenge

Trails that promote physical activity through walking, running, skiing, paddling and similar experiences, events, and program partnerships

Parks for mental and spiritual health

Trails, quiet settings and program partnerships including Forest therapy, Bush Adventure therapy, yoga, art and connecting to nature through social activities and cultural events

Nature-based therapeutic programs

Collaborations with healthcare providers that support park prescriptions, nature-based rehabilitation and sensory trails

Wellbeing tourism

Collaborations including events with tourism organisations, local government and private operators that promote wellbeing

Park stewardship

Growing volunteering and education partnerships including citizen science

Healthy Choices

Implement healthy and sustainable food and beverage options in parks

Information and knowledge	Leadership and advocacy	Healthy workplaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature, including where and how to access nature and programs, are understood by the community and health professionals Easy to access information and resources are available and shared across platforms Programs are evaluated and communicated Cross-sector campaigns promote nature-based health and wellbeing Traditional knowledge informs communication and program content of nature-based health and wellbeing benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation in the global, national and state HPHP movement to share and integrate best practice Parks Victoria is a leader in advocating evidence-based HPHP benefits to parks and the community The environment, health, community and education sectors will be more aware and engaged in participating in nature-based programs Parks Victoria staff will be role models in demonstrating the values of HPHP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks Victoria will be a role model in promoting healthy workplaces
<p>Healthy and Active Digital Online resources and toolkits</p> <p>Evidence and research partnerships Universities, health and community sector applied research & evaluation initiatives</p> <p>Relevant, innovative and interactive technology Apps that encourage nature-based health goals and park stewardship</p> <p>Cross-sector campaigns Targeted campaigns including Feel Blue Touch Green, Seniors week, Premier's Active April and relevant health-based weeks</p>	<p>Cross-sector policy integration Victorian Health and Nature Memorandum, Victorian Active Living Alliance (VALA) and the Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise (VHEE)</p> <p>Parks sector leadership Active collaboration in nature-based health initiatives with the parks industry including IUCN and World Urban Parks</p> <p>Active dialogue with health and community sector Collaborate with research, not for profit, philanthropy and corporate organisations with common goals</p>	<p>Parks Victoria Employee Wellbeing Plan</p> <p>Healthy and Sustainable Food and Beverage Choices within Parks Victoria</p> <p>Promote health and wellbeing information and programs to park staff and volunteers</p>



Implementation

Programs and Partnerships

Providing support to encourage regular contact with nature and cultural heritage will continue to be 'business as usual' through the provision of facilities, services and program support for recreation, volunteering, education and associated activities.

Cross-sector partnerships with environment, community and health sector organisations, including peak bodies, corporate and philanthropic organisations, different levels of government, research partners, volunteers and a wide range of service providers are critical to the success of the plan. These partnerships can grow Victoria as a leading destination for nature-based health and wellbeing programs and events.

Many partnerships and programs have already commenced. Appendix 2 provides a summary of existing and growing programs and partnerships.

	Regular contact with nature	Nature-based health promotion activities	Nature-based health interventions
Parks Victoria	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
Other Government	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Philanthropic and corporate partners	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Community and not-for-profit partners	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Research partners	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓

Measures of success and filling knowledge gaps

Measuring changes in physical and mental health outcomes of target populations that are directly attributable to parks and nature can be challenging due to a wide range of social and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing.

Short and medium term evaluation measures will include:

- Number of health and wellbeing-based events and programs in parks
- Number, type and effectiveness of partnerships with health and wellbeing service providers and peak organisations
- Level of participation in health and wellbeing based programs and events, both by park visitors and health professionals and practitioners
- Percentage of park visitors undertaking physical activity or relaxation as a primary motivation for their park visit
- Volume of web and social media presence and downloads of nature-based health resources
- Change in proportion of visitors who undertake physical activity in parks
- Change in volume of active stewardship programs

Specific program-based measures will be further developed that will include risk reduction measures and case studies of improved health outcomes.

Knowledge gaps

Research partnerships will be actively sought to further quantify the benefits of Victoria's parks for health and wellbeing. Parks Victoria will partner with research organisations and service providers in evaluating the benefits of specific programs, including where possible, reduction in risk, dose response and broader health and wellbeing outcomes.

Appendix 1

Legislative context

The Healthy Parks Healthy People Framework aligns with the objects and functions of Parks Victoria under the Parks Victoria Act 2018 through its:

(i) Objects:

- provide for and encourage the community's enjoyment of and involvement in Parks Victoria managed land; and
- contribute to the wellbeing of the community through the effective protection and management of Parks Victoria managed land; and

(ii) Functions:

- to control and manage Parks Victoria managed land, in a manner that protects, conserves and enhances the land and in a manner which provides for the land to be appropriately used, enjoyed and appreciated, including doing all or any of the following:
 - providing opportunities for the community to enjoy and appreciate Parks Victoria managed land and providing facilities, information and services to support that enjoyment and appreciation



Appendix 2

Programs and Partnerships Plan



