



VICTORIAN
NATIONAL PARKS
ASSOCIATION
Be part of nature

VNPA VISION & MISSION

- Victoria is a place with a diverse and healthy natural environment protected, respected and enjoyed by all.
- VNPA is an independent, not for profit, non party political, supporter and membership-based group



Key Themes for 'Green Infrastructure':

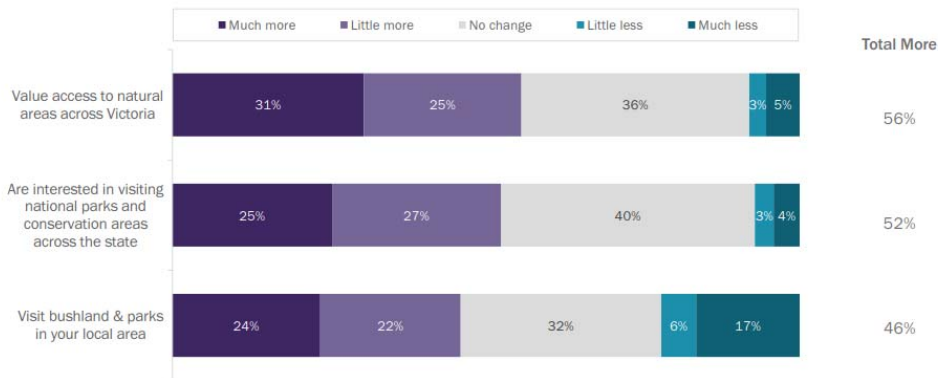
- 1. The importance of accessibility to nature and open space for urban populations**
- 2. Enhancing Melbourne's "Green Edge"**
- 3. Planning, creating and enhancing urban nature space networks**
- 4. Management and funding for national parks, metropolitan parks and natural areas**
- 5. Blue Infrastructure – "Blue Wedges" and coasts**

The Importance of 'Green Infrastructure':

- A thriving natural environment not only conserves biological diversity but also sustains the health and wellbeing of people and communities - both physical recreation, respite and mental health.
- The role of parks and nature has been under-recognised as an important contributor to the prevention and treatment of many human health conditions
- Parks and open space provide many services, drainage, pollination, stormwater mitigation, water purification, air filtration, climate regulation, coastal protection, along with maintenance of habitats for native species, provision of nursery populations and genetic diversity.
- Parks and natural open space often have multiple uses they can act as wildlife corridors, offer walking tracks but also act as floodways or drainage lines and stormwater retention.
- Open natural space in urban areas should be clearly planned along with other forms of passive and active open space, and should also maximise the multiple functions of this space.
- They are also popular, even more so since COVID.

Most people in Melbourne say the COVID-19 restrictions have made them value access to natural areas across Victoria more

- More than half Melbournians say the COVID-19 restrictions have made them value access to natural areas across Victoria more (56%), or are more interested in visiting national parks and conservation areas across the state (52%).
 - Those who have been stood down due to COVID-19 are more likely than average to value access to natural areas across Victoria *much more* (54%; cf. average 31%)
- Nearly half (46%) of those in Melbourne say the COVID restrictions made them visit bushland and parks in their local area.

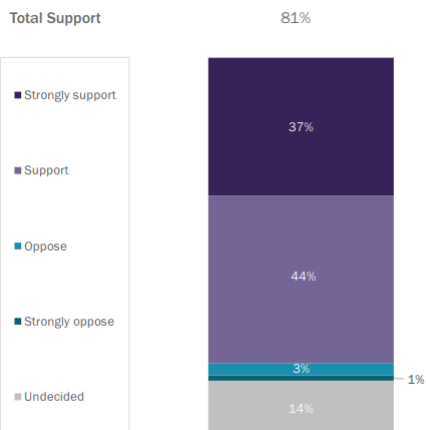


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Chart 1. Have the COVID restrictions changed how much you...; base: Melbournians (n = 1,009)

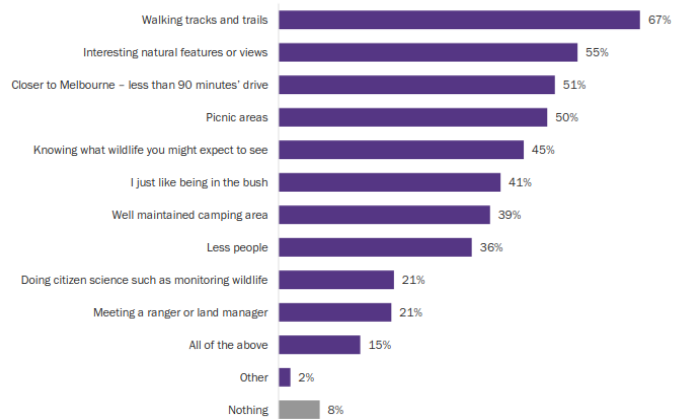
Oct 2020

Four in five Melbournians support expanding national parks in Victoria

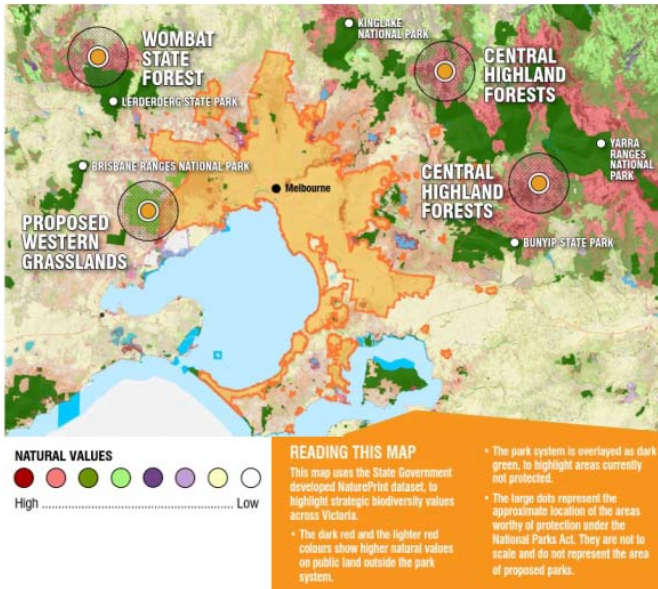


Currently, there are proposals to expand national parks in central Victoria, around Daylesford, Woodend, Bendigo and Ballarat? Do you support or oppose these proposals?

Tracks, trails, natural features and proximity are what would make Melbournians visit national parks more often



Enhancing “Melbourne’s Green Edge”



In contrast with Sydney, there is a significant shortage of national parks and reserves within a short drive (90 min – 120 min) of metropolitan Melbourne.

Around Sydney there are major 8 national parks covering 1 million ha.

Melbourne, has less than 185,000 hectares (a large chunk of which is in closed water catchments in the Yarra Ranges/ Central Highlands).

There are opportunities:

- New national parks are Wombat forest, currently formally proposed , **but 12 month over due.**
- Western Grassland Reserves, **only 10% acquired after a decade.**
- Additions to Yarra Ranges NP or Great Forest National Park

Urban Nature Networks

- Approximately 145,600 hectares of land in the Metropolitan Melbourne VEAC investigation area contains native vegetation, of which two thirds is private land and **one third is public land** (i.e. Crown and public authority land).
- Approximately half (50%) of the public land with remnant native vegetation in Metro area is managed for conservation within the protected area system, so there is a big opportunity to enhance and build on this asset.
- No real strategy for natural open space in the Melbourne Metropolitan Area, and there hasn't been a formal one for 18 years.

Plan Melbourne includes a number of policies, including:

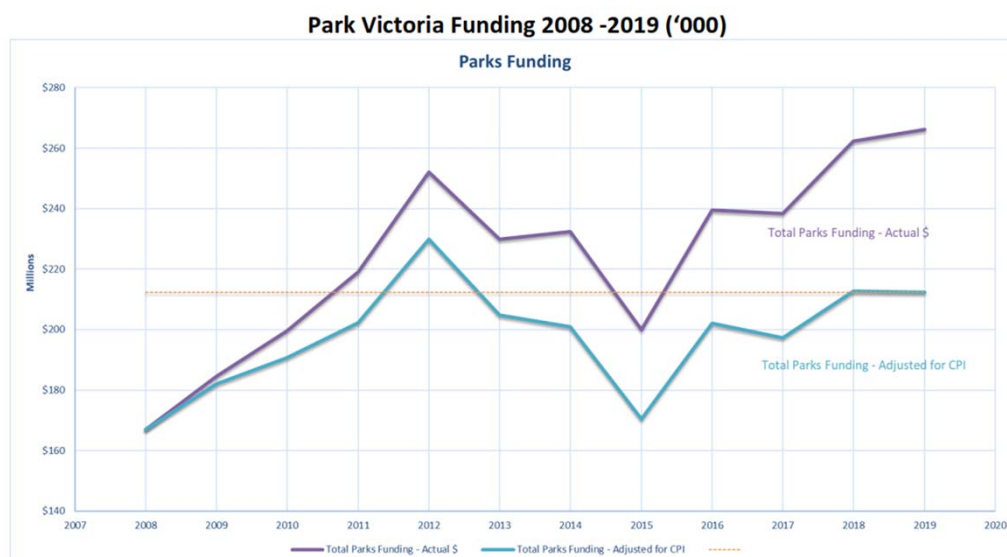
- **Policy 6.5.1 Create a network of green spaces that support biodiversity conservation and opportunities to connect with nature**
- Policy 6.5.3 Protect the coastlines and waters of Port Phillip Bay and Western Port and Policy 4.1.4 Protect and enhance the metropolitan water's edge parklands
- **There is no clear mechanism or initiatives in the Plan Melbourne Implementation Plan to specifically look at nature spaces in urban context.** We need an Urban Nature Space Strategy to recognise, enhance and integrate the role of natural areas within the urban context.

Management of Parks and Reserves

- Improving access to nature is not just about additions to our system of parks and reserves. Area need to be planned and managed and in urban areas, this can be more intensive & expensive

Currently, funding for the management of Victoria's park system sits at less than 0.5% of the state budget. This inadequate funding does not match:

- legislated objectives for park management;
 - community expectations;
 - gives little recognition of the considerable economic benefits that parks bring.
- While funding for national parks was dramatically cut between 2013 and 2016, it has increased in raw terms to above 2012 levels.
 - If cost increases are adjusted for CPI, overall funding would still be \$20 to \$30 million short of 2012 levels.
 - 37% of parks funding comes from the Parks and Reserve Trust, which is collected on water bills in only some parts of Metropolitan Melbourne and can only be spent in the Metropolitan Areas.



An increase of park funding to 1% of the state budget, would dramatically improve capacity to manage estate across the whole state

Blue Infrastructure – “Blue Wedges” and coasts

- The iconic bays and coasts of Melbourne – Port Phillip and Westernport, are a key piece of natural infrastructure
- Victoria’s Marine protected areas area a key conservation tool, recognised globally. Victoria was once a global leader protecting around 5% of state waters and is now been well by-passed by other jurisdictions. Second lowest of any state or territory.
- Victoria currently has a policy ban on new marine national parks

In Port Phillip & Westernport consider a process to improve protection of key coastal and marine assets:

- create the Geelong and Bellarine Wetlands State Park
- create the Port Phillip Wetlands State Park to give stronger protection to Ramsar sites between Limeburners Bay and Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve
- better protect the Moolap Wetlands at Geelong
- establish a North Westernport Coastal Park from Quail Island to Tooradin and the Reef Island Bass River Coastal Park

And

- that a marine spatial plan (a tool under the new Marine & Coastal Act) be developed for Port Phillip and Westernport to guide future use of the bays

THANK YOU

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