

BOX 8.7 MELBOURNE



Albert Park Lane

Melbourne (population 3.5 million), Victoria's capital, is Australia's second largest city with an extensive integrated network of open spaces. Virtually all the open space is Crown Land but managed by various tiers of government.

Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria is statutorily responsible for managing 40 per cent (6,200 hectares) of the network of open space within metropolitan Melbourne (the rest falling under the jurisdiction of local councils) as well as national and state parks around the metropolitan fringe. The agency was created in 1996 from the amalgamation of the Victoria National Parks Service and Melbourne Parks and Waterways, to manage most of Victoria's national, state, regional and recreational parks. Through the merger, declining funding levels could be maximised by directing resource priorities across the whole system and eliminating duplicated services between government organisations.

Key output focused groups have been identified to describe Park Victoria's service delivery obligations to government, namely Natural Values Management, Cultural Values Management, Wildfire and Other Emergencies Management, and Visitor Services Management. The latter is directly responsible for the management of open spaces.

Funding the metropolitan park network

The primary source of funding for Parks Victoria's metropolitan parks is revenue from a 'parks charge' levied on all domestic, commercial and industrial properties within metropolitan Melbourne, and collected and administered by the state government. Parks Victoria receives about two-thirds to spend on its corporate governance and the management of open spaces. Even with this discrete funding, Parks Victoria continually needs to present its case to government for additional funds to meet increasing costs and the growing scale of its asset maintenance/replacement liability.

The 'levels of service' (LOS) framework

The delivery of sustainable visitor services and facilities with limited resources requires a strategic context for the management and creation of built assets. Parks Victoria has developed the LOS framework to establish the 'optimum' quantity and mix of visitor services, given forecast user demand and the level of resources available.

The LOS framework uses a comprehensive, regularly updated, database of visitors, assets and resources, which includes the value, condition, life expectancy and future maintenance requirements of the built assets to develop optimum approaches for each park according to its relative priority in a park-wide context. This process quantifies the gap between model levels of service and actual levels for each park, generating appropriate service level scenarios. When applied to determine future asset replacement costs, it indicated that Parks Victoria is significantly under-spending on maintenance, and is facing major replacement costs in the next ten years.