

Creating a sense of PLAce

Strategic Framework for Action 2008-2010

May 2008



A United Voice for the Parks and Leisure Profession

"Parks and Leisure Australia is the peak Australian Industry Association that services parks and leisure professionals who plan, develop, manage or provide for community parks and leisure opportunities, which enhance and improve the quality of life for all Australians"

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1. Background

This framework has been drafted to identify a strategic direction for action to position PLA to meet the existing and emerging challenges confronting the parks and leisure industry on a national basis. The framework has been shaped through input and participation of all national board members. Those not able to attend all meetings/workshops have provided feedback information. It is important to note that in shaping PLA's focus it does include community sport, natural and built environments, which provide public access leisure experiences within the parks and leisure industry.

This framework explored: -

- ▲ Key drivers and issues confronting the industry
- ▲ Barriers to adoption
- ▲ Opportunities to be explored
- ▲ Priority actions to be progressed

This document recognises that PLA operates on the basis of a unitary model. The strength of this model is a consistent approach to the major issues confronting the industry across the country. It also recognises that these issues may be addressed in different ways (due to the differences across Australia and the significance of the issues) on the basis that the proposed outcomes remain the same.

It is the PLA National Board's intention that, after ratification and feedback from regional councils that this strategic framework for action is adopted as national policy. The outcomes of this action planning process will be assembled into a document that provides direction and guidance and can be expanded as more detail and individual projects are developed nationally and regionally.

Figure 1 Schematic representation of the evolving strategic plan for action.



2. Vision and Mission

The following vision was derived for the strategic framework.

“PLA, creating a sense of PLACe”

This vision recognises the role of parks and leisure in building community networks which lead to the development of a cultural and spiritual connection to a locality. A sense of PLACe.

Within this context, PLA articulated its mission as:

“Facilitating the provision of quality, diverse, integrated, accessible and valued parks and leisure opportunities and facilities”

The mission statement embraces concepts such as: social and environmental capital, social equity; community wellness, quality of life, teamwork and respect. This strategic framework identifies a process and steps toward the realisation of PLA’s vision and mission.

Photo mosaic of parks and leisure activities



3. Key issues

The following themes and issues were identified for PLA as being the main drivers for parks and leisure now and into the future. The framework will endeavour to respond through an innovative, leading edge process.

Governance

- ▲ PLA structure
- ▲ PLA operations
- ▲ PLA partners
- ▲ Recognition for achievements
- ▲ Membership

Community infrastructure

- ▲ Urban ecosystems - created landscapes
- ▲ Provision of community facilities
- ▲ Provision of dedicated parks and leisure facilities
- ▲ Evolution of urban form, urban sprawl, urban densification
- ▲ Roles for practitioners

Climate change adaptation

- ▲ Drought and water provision
- ▲ Changing leisure patterns
- ▲ Sports strategies
- ▲ Environment strategies

Social capital

- ▲ Life-long wellness (infants, youth, adults, elderly)
- ▲ Community connections and networking
- ▲ Social equity and access

Industry development

- ▲ Work force planning
- ▲ Education, promotion and advocacy
- ▲ Training and accreditation
- ▲ Professional development

Technology

- ▲ Use of appropriate technology throughout the industry
- ▲ Adopting emerging web-based communications technologies

Social inclusion

- ▲ Social equity, engagement, inclusion, participation and mutual respect

4. Barriers and challenges

Climate change, changes in rates of sport and active recreation participation, the need for life-long wellness programs and community expectations, all provide barriers and challenges for parks and leisure planning. Many of these impediments however, can also be seen as potential opportunities.

Governance

- ▲ Dis-integrated planning and delivery mechanisms
- ▲ Fragmented and sometimes introverted organisations
- ▲ Organisations being techno-phobic
- ▲ Strengthening membership through provision of relevant and required services
- ▲ Under-valuing and under-utilisation of skills within membership
- ▲ Identification of potential business investors, partners and sponsors
- ▲ Competition for resources is increasing

Community infrastructure

- ▲ A focus on activity not outcomes
- ▲ The social divide has increased between the haves and have nots
- ▲ The different needs of urban and rural communities
- ▲ Rural communities are often limited in terms of access to facilities
- ▲ Focus moving from competition to cooperation
- ▲ Increasing need for instant action and instant gratification
- ▲ Smaller back yards mean a greater need for regional open space
- ▲ Opportunities for roof-top facilities in commercial and industrial centres

Climate change adaptation

- ▲ Major barriers to facilities provision because of drought and water shortages
- ▲ Climate change adaptation strategies required
- ▲ Move to indoor facilities, night-time fixtures, artificial surfaces creates a resourcing need
- ▲ Parks and leisure is seen as a discretionary use for water allocations

Social capital

- ▲ Increasingly diverse expectations of 'place'
- ▲ Continual increase in social and environmental capital
- ▲ Increasing populations through infill expecting greater servicing
- ▲ The expectation for more security in parks and leisure to overcome perceptions in community safety
- ▲ Higher expectations within our aging population
- ▲ Greater choice and a diverse range of outcomes
- ▲ Parks and leisure is undervalued in terms of wider social capital building
- ▲ Tribalism of some sports organizations and lack of willingness to share resources and facilities
- ▲ Lack of community heroes promoting parks and leisure outcomes

Industry development

- ▲ Indemnity issues around parks and leisure environments and activities
- ▲ Rates of volunteerism are falling
- ▲ Lack of availability of, and competition for human and financial resources
- ▲ Skills shortages
- ▲ Absence of multidisciplinary, applied Research and Development

Technology

- ▲ Societal move from tribes to networks with the rise of communications
- ▲ Lack of and difficulties in accessing information
- ▲ The pace of change in adopted technologies

Social inclusion

- ▲ Greater 'connectedness' in functional groups
- ▲ Greater levels of isolation in marginalised groups
- ▲ Lack of equity for all community members in the access to facilities



5. Proposed Directions

This section builds on the Key Issues presented in the previous sections and links the strategic directions for action of each.

ISSUE	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY ACTIONS
Governance	Ensure PLA is a responsive and adaptive organisation resulting in increased membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressively expand the Parks and Leisure Australia membership • Utilise national forums to effect change at a national level • Establish "PLA Consulting" with a focus on national applied research, management and capacity building
Community infrastructure	Provide education and training, advocacy and the profiling of quality facilities which highlight value for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national community usage model of school facilities • Establish a national "standards of provision" for parks and leisure infrastructure incorporating open space, aquatic and built facilities • Agitate for a "PLA to Play" • Establish best use guidelines for facility management
Climate change	Promote a national dialogue and adaptive management process to balance amenity, facilities provision and finite water supplies. Provide education and training, advocacy and best practice processes which ensure drought and climate change does not reduce the quality, provision, or usage of parks and leisure infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an issues paper that explores potential impacts of climate change on the parks and leisure industry and documents local examples adaptation best practice and outlines options for communicating information nationally. • Promote urban parks as community class rooms to inform and educate the community on climate change and environmental issues
Social capital	Promote social equity and connectedness through best practice processes and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the contribution Parks and Leisure makes to community wellness issues of obesity, mental health, diabetes and other aspects of community well being • Agitate for the promotion of greater physical activity across community
Industry development	Promote practitioner career pathways, training, accreditation and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen and develop partnerships and alliances • Engage with emerging parks and leisure professionals • Review Parks and Leisure workforce practices within Australia • Establish a national skills passport
Technology	Promote cost effective, innovative adoption of technology to improve communication, exchange of information and networking systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and promote where possible, use of leading edge technology for the parks and leisure industry
Social inclusion	Advocate for social equity through inclusive practices of participation and respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide member information and professional development opportunities on inclusive practices