

# Connecting People to Nature

## *Healthy Parks Healthy People*

CBD SBSTTA 17, Montreal  
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Next slide: introducing PV

## Parks Victoria

- Statutory authority
- Diverse system of terrestrial and marine parks, major metropolitan parks, rivers, bays, cultural & heritage sites
- More than 4 million hectares (17% of state)
- 70% of Victoria's coastline
- Approx. 800 staff
- 120 office locations



Next slide: introducing HPHP

# *Healthy Parks Healthy People*

Reference: Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences, Deakin University "The Health Benefits of Contact with Nature in a Park Context" (revised 2008)



HPHP has been the foundation for PV over the last 10 years+

In 2010, Parks Victoria hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> International HPHP Congress in Melbourne with more than 1,200 delegates from 36 countries.

For this report and more, see [hphpcentral.com](http://hphpcentral.com) (one of the legacies from the Melbourne Congress)

A 2<sup>nd</sup> International HPHP Congress will be held next in 2015 by the US National Parks Service.

Next slide: Defining HPHP

## Principles of *Healthy Parks Healthy People*

- The wellbeing of all societies depends on healthy ecosystems
- Parks conserve healthy ecosystems
- Contact with nature is essential for improving emotional, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing
- Parks are fundamental to economic growth and to vibrant and healthy communities



The HPHP approach applies the concept of ecologically sustainable development to parks. This concept is about conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.

The approach is relevant to all people, as we all ultimately depend on nature for health and wellbeing and parks are the cornerstone for conserving nature and ecological processes.

Also in the approach, parks and protected areas are defined as relevant to local conditions (city, urban, protected area ....AND with people as visitors who come and go OR who live in/adjacent to the PA and are dependent on nature (PA) for their daily survival).

Next slide: defining health

## Defining Health

*“A state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing ..... and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”*

World Health Organisation 1946



It is important to define health and often this WHO definition of health is used, relating to a holistic state of physical, mental and social wellbeing.

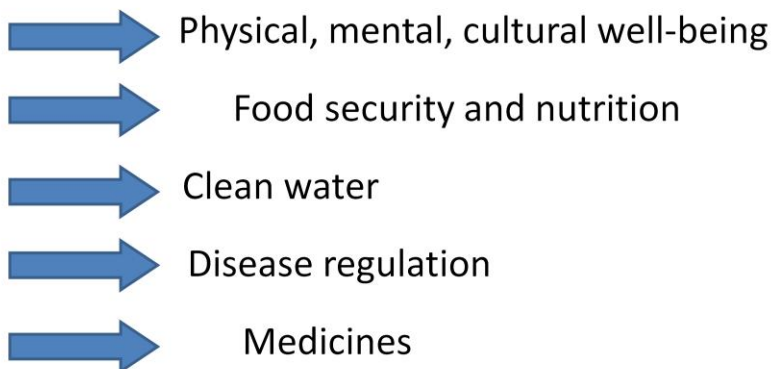
In the HPHP approach, health and wellbeing is defined as narrowly or as broadly as is relevant (covering individual physical, emotional and spiritual health and community health and wellbeing, including social connectedness).

There are many other options and definitions, such as ‘Wellbeing’ including the elements of:

- satisfactory human relationships;
- meaningful occupation;
- opportunities for contact with nature, creative expression, and making a positive contribution to human society. *Furnass 1996*

Next slide: health and biodiversity linkages

## Biodiversity and Health Benefits



- Health and environment are often described and linked in terms of water-borne disease; or vector-borne disease and/or indoor smoke pollution.
- However the health and environment linkages are much more diverse and less obvious.
- Biodiversity is the foundation for ecosystem functioning and ecosystems provide for our human survival.
- A healthy planet needs well functioning (healthy) ecosystems.
- NEXT SLIDE: global health trends in NCDs

## Emerging Global Health Challenges

- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have surpassed infectious diseases as the leading cause of death (63% of all deaths, 36 million people).
- 31% of adults aged 15 years or older are insufficiently active
- Physical inactivity is responsible for 1 in 10 deaths each year and estimated to cost \$24 billion each year.
- The leading NCD deaths are cardiovascular diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases, and diabetes.

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Time and activities in nature can be part of the solution to NCD epidemic (and a cost-effective one too).

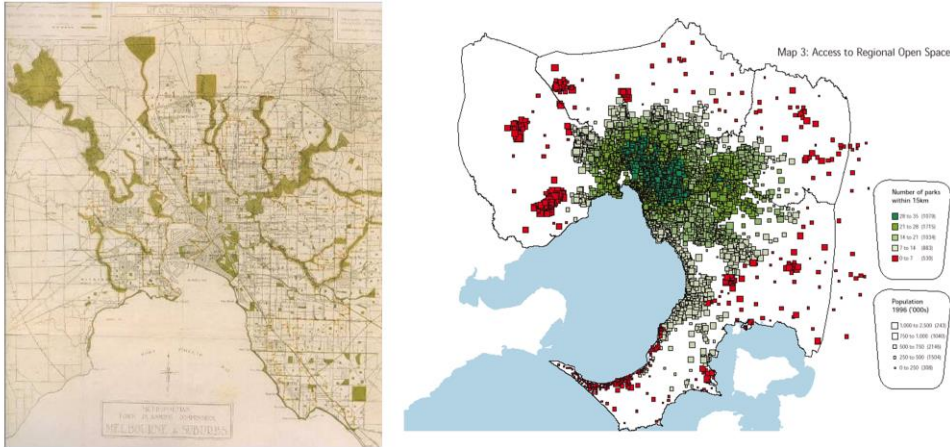
NEXT SLIDE: 1929 plan (nature is not a new health medicine...)



## The idea is now new

In 1929 the Melbourne Metropolitan Town Planning Commission –

*'abundant evidence is available to substantiate the views of city planners, the medical profession and psychologists that proper outdoor recreation has a most beneficial effect on the health, morals and business efficiency of communities and consequentially on national life.'*



Left slide -

When urban parks were first designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a strong belief in the health advantages that would result.

It was also believed that exposure to nature fostered psychological wellbeing, reduced the stresses associated with urban living and promoted physical health.

Right slide -

Representation of inequity of open space supply across Melbourne – based on access to parks and major foreshore nodes

Red = undersupplied areas, correspond with growth corridors - quantity issue

Green = well supplied but need to sustain quality and relevance of existing network

Next slide: photo of Melbourne suburb



## Imagine a life without parks....



Let's think of our lifestyles in a more local context

Is this your new life?

Have you converted the backyard into an outdoor room = less wild backyards

For the first time in history, more people live in cities and urban areas....

- Next slide: Australian stats on NCDs

## It's Alarming!

- Almost 9 million Australian adults (54%) do not do enough daily physical activity
- 60% of males and 50% of females are overweight or obese
- **By 2025, predicted to be**
  - **83% of males**
  - **75% of females**
  - **33% of 5 to 19 year olds**

- Rise in NCDs and leading cause of death
- Ageing and urbanized population

We have recently drafted some new long-term directions for Parks Victoria. We are proposing to focus on four themes, one of which is **Connecting people and parks** and our first goal in this priority area of work is to encourage more people, to be more active, more often in parks.

Next slide: Active in Parks

## Active in Parks Geelong

### Aim:

To connect more people to parks and open space to improve their health and wellbeing – **get them physical**

### Strategy:

Harness the authority of health care professionals, to recruit individuals into **physical activity within their local park.**

**Geelong is a proof of concept of replicable Australia-wide model**



[www.activeinparks.org](http://www.activeinparks.org)

Targeting but not exclusive to building advocacy within the healthy industry - owned by local leaders

Green referrals from GPs

Referrals from specific health groups (pathways, headspace m/h, disability groups, play groups)

Referrals from community groups (CALD, seniors, new migrants)

The program aims to activate community and encourage individuals and community groups to get physical in parks by harnessing the health industry and local leaders within the community.

Next slide: Kinglake project

## Green Connections

Improving health and wellbeing of Marysville and Kinglake bushfire affected families & individuals through 'hands on' environmental fire recovery projects.



### Conservation Outcomes & People Outcomes

#### Activities involve:

being with friends and family, social interaction, providing companionship, the re-establishment of a collective identity, working collaboratively with community and key stakeholders



### A project responding to a new need:

#### Stakeholder collaboration between community, NGO and government stakeholders

Recovery Committees,

Friends Groups

Government Depts (state and local)

Catchment Management Authority

NGOs

Youth groups

Residents

People & Parks Foundation

Next slide: Trust for nature volunteer survey results

## Key findings from Trust for Nature study of environmental volunteers:

	TfN	Controls	P-value
General health (1 = v. healthy, 5 = v. unhealthy)	1.7	1.9	0.028
Annual visits to GP (doctor) (1 = <1; 5 = >10)	2.0	2.9	0.013
Feeling safer in local comm <sup>y</sup> . (1= always, 5 = never)	1.0	1.3	0.001
Sense of belonging (1 = str'gly agree, 5 = str. dis.)	1.4	1.7	0.010
Attracted to living here (1 = str. ag., 5 = str. dis.)	1.2	1.5	0.040
Work to impr. comm <sup>y</sup> . (1 = str. ag., 5 = str. dis.)	1.3	1.8	0.005
Opportunity to use skills (1 = always, 5 = never)	1.4	1.8	0.001

This table highlights the findings: on these 7 parameters, there was a statistically significant positive difference between the TfN volunteers and the controls. For example, TfN volunteers make fewer visits to the GP in a year, feel safer in their local community, are more willing to work to improve their local community, and feel they have the opportunity to use the skills they have developed over their lifetime. One definition of wellbeing, provided by Bryan Furnass (1996), notes that the components of wellbeing include opportunities for contact with nature, creative expression and making a positive contribution to human society – these are exactly what environmental volunteering provides. That such health and wellbeing benefits can be obtained through actions that restore and sustain ecosystems suggests that adopting an active strategy of promoting environmental volunteering is more than just a quaint idea – it is pivotal to environmental and human health.

Next slide: results from Feel Blue Touch Green interviews

## Findings from 'Feel Blue, Touch Green':

- In-depth interviews identified benefits for:
  - Developing skills, taking risks & confronting challenges
  - Mental health, confidence & self-worth
  - Stress & anxiety management
  - Managing depression & depressed mood
  - Improving physical health
  - Building social connections/social capital
  - Building natural capital

But perhaps more telling were the findings from the in-depth interviews. This is how the participants saw the project.

Next slide: barriers and opportunities



### **Parks & Health Industries: the barriers & opportunities**

- We speak different languages
- Health industries need hard evidence and facts
- Uptake can be slow and difficult on both sides
- Both focused on health outcomes
- Both accept biodiversity and human health are linked (e.g. medicinal plants)
- Both recognise benefits of partnerships



Next slide: successes

## Successes

- Engaged a strategic health advisor for parks
- Formal partnership with *beyondblue* (mental health)
- Program funding from Medibank (private health insurance)
- Support from Diabetes Australia, Arthritis Foundation, National Heart Foundation, Maternal and Child Associations
- HPHP Congress 2010 and HPHP Melbourne Communiqué
- [www.hphpcentral.com](http://www.hphpcentral.com)
- CBD and IUCN interest incl. IUCN HPHP Task Force
- HPHP motion past at 2012 IUCN WCC



NEW Emerging opportunities are with Primary Care Partnerships and WHO regional offices. Find the health mechanisms and initiatives in your area and invite dialogue and exploration of shared opportunities to work for common benefits.

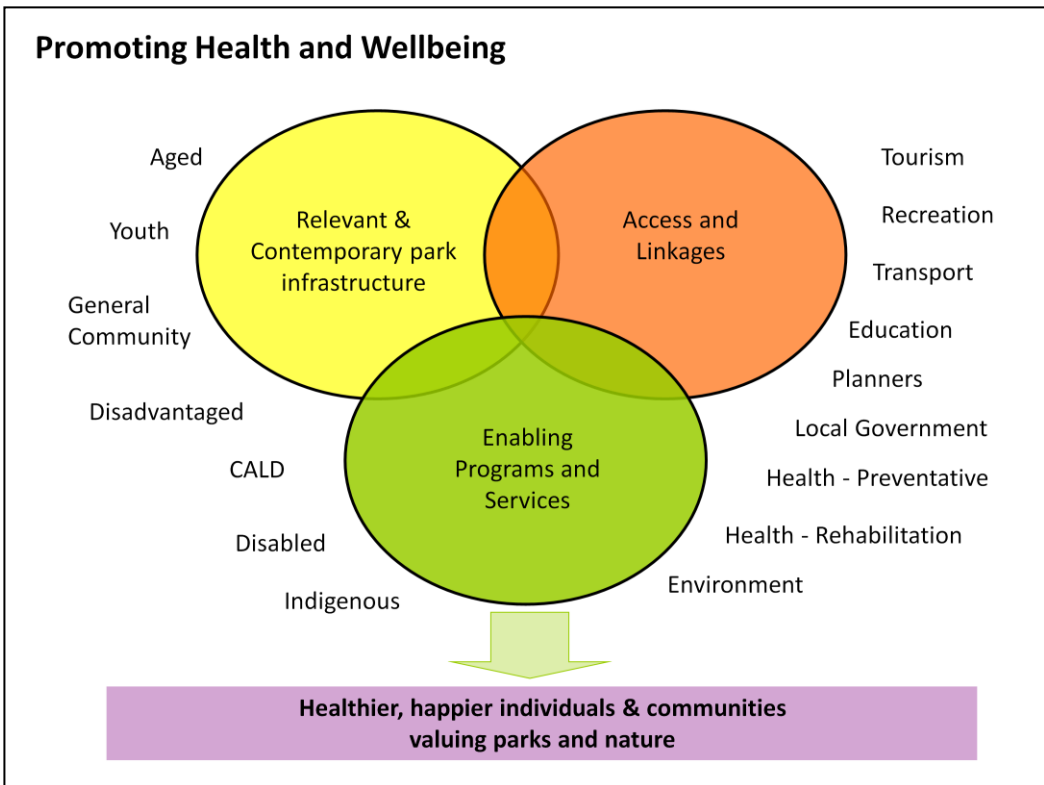
Next slide: lessons learned

### **Lessons learned**

- Work in collaboration with government, NGOs, business and community sectors
- Obtain endorsement from peak bodies (VicHealth)
- Imbed programs and initiatives within the health and environment government departments
- Recruit high profile champions
- Measure outcomes - imbed research into all programs
- Ensure initiatives are replicable



Next slide: Summary graphic



There is a lot of information and support out there that can be adapted and fast-track your learning and successes and minimize errors. ([hphpcentral.com](http://hphpcentral.com) for example)

Plus

Come to the **World Parks Congress** to learn, share and contribute more!

Next slide: Thank you!

# Thank you

Kathryn Campbell  
Manager Healthy Parks Healthy People  
Parks Victoria



This is a very promising time to be involved in work on connecting people to nature and health is a universal opportunity.

The Healthy Parks Healthy People approach is working and having global impacts. See you at World Parks Congress, if not before then.