



# Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend



Future Directions Plan

November 2004

*Healthy Parks  
Healthy People*

Parks  
Victoria

The Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend Future Directions Plan is approved for implementation. Its purpose is to direct management and development of the Parklands until the plan is reviewed. A draft Future Directions Plan for Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend was published in October 2003. The submissions received have been considered in developing this approved Plan.

### **Copies**


This Plan may be downloaded from the Park Victoria website 'www.parkweb.vic.gov.au'.

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Level 10, 535 Bourke Street


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### **Information**

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**BRIMBANK PARK AND HORSESHOE BEND  
FUTURE DIRECTIONS PLAN**

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Cover: Maribyrnong River, Brimbank Park.

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## FOREWORD

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Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend is an important Metropolitan Park in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The Park has significant landscape values, being a valley cut into overlying volcanic basalt plains dissected by the Maribyrnong River and Taylors Creek. The encircling ridges of the escarpment provide panoramic views both within the Park and to the surrounding region.

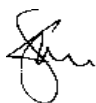
The Park provides a variety of settings along the Maribyrnong River to enable park visitors to enjoy and experience nature, while undertaking a diverse range of recreational activities. In particular, the location of the Park on the Metropolitan Trail Network, with linkages to both local and regional trails provides an extensive network of opportunities for park visitors to engage in walking and cycling.

The Park plays an important role both in contributing to the health and well being of the community, as well as protecting and enhancing important environmental, landscape and cultural heritage values.

This Future Directions Plan provides strategic management directions for Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend for the next 10 to 15 years. Focus over this time will be on maintaining visitor facilities for public enjoyment and protecting significant natural values.

The plan will be implemented by Parks Victoria as the public land manager in partnership with local government, community groups and adjoining landowners.

The valuable contribution of the community during the planning process and advice provided by staff within Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and the City of Brimbank is recognised.



Mark Stone  
Chief Executive  
Parks Victoria



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend is located 15 kilometres north west of Melbourne along the Maribyrnong River, forming the northern portion of the Maribyrnong Valley Parklands. The Park comprises a total of 361 hectares, of which 328.7 hectares forms Brimbank Park and 32.3 hectares forms Horseshoe Bend.

The land for the Park was first acquired for public open space by the former Board of Works in 1974, with the first stage of Brimbank Park opened to the public in 1976. Horseshoe Bend Farm was opened some years later.

Ownership of the Park and farm was transferred to Melbourne Parks and Waterways in 1994 following its separation from Melbourne Water (formerly Board of Works). Upon the creation of Parks Victoria and the subsequent wind-up of Melbourne Parks and Waterways all MPW land transferred to the state in 2001 to be reserved as Crown Land under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 for the purposes of conservation, recreation, tourism and leisure. Melbourne Water is responsible for management of the bed and banks of the Maribyrnong River.

The *Maribyrnong Valley Metropolitan Park Master Plan* was published in 1977 and guided early development of the Park. The *Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend Farm Setting Plan* was subsequently produced in 1996, which is now superseded by this Plan.

The role of this Future Directions Plan is to provide a ten to fifteen year strategic framework and clear direction for management of Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend.

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend is an important component of the open space

network servicing the western suburbs. The most recent visitor counts from 2001 indicate that approximately 600,000 people visit the Park, with 450,000 people visiting Brimbank Park and 141,000 visitors to Horseshoe Bend each year.

The Maribyrnong River Trail (shared bicycle and pedestrian pathway), which runs through the Park, forms part of the Metropolitan Trail Network and will ultimately provide links via the proposed Taylors Creek and Maribyrnong River trails from the Organ Pipes National Park to the Bay Trail on Port Phillip Bay. This trail is a key attractor for visitors to the Park.

### Key Values

The key values of Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend include:

- *The wide range of visitor services and infrastructure provided within the Park, reflecting its long established nature.*
- *The location of the Park on the Metropolitan Trail Network with linkages to both local and regional trails provide an extensive network of opportunities for park visitors to engage in walking and cycling.*
- *A diversity of indigenous plant species, including eight threatened species, three rare species, one vulnerable and one depleted.*
- *An important component of the wildlife corridor along the Maribyrnong River supporting seven threatened faunal species of which 2 are nationally threatened.*
- *Archaeological significance and cultural heritage values associated with the Wurundjeri tribes who used the Maribyrnong River and its tributaries as an important source of food and materials.*

- A variety of settings providing opportunities for a diverse range of passive recreation experiences such as picnicking, socialising, nature appreciation, walking and cycling.
- Significant landscape values comprising a valley cut into overlying volcanic basalt plains dissected by the Maribyrnong River and Taylors Creek. The encircling ridges of the escarpment provide panoramic views both within the park and to the surrounding region.
- Its contribution to the urban fabric, providing a green open space and contrast to the housing development and other urban infrastructure on either side of the valley.

### **Role of the Park**

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend is one of the most significant metropolitan Parks in Melbourne's west. It provides attractive settings along the Maribyrnong River to enable park visitors to enjoy and experience nature, while undertaking recreational activities in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

The vision for the Park can be described as follows:-

*Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend provide a panoramic open space along the Maribyrnong River where visitors can relax and enjoy a range of settings, facilities and opportunities for recreation. The Park includes natural bushland, open and sheltered recreation spaces and dramatic landscapes in an urban setting, contributing significantly to the health and well being of the community as well as enhancing the natural environment.*

### **Management Framework**

The management of the Park will be underpinned by a number of guiding principles, which link broadly to Melbourne's

Open Space Strategy, Melbourne 2030 and strategic directions that are specific to Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend. The land within Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend boundary has been divided into six management zones.

These management zones reinforce the identity of particular areas within the Park and provide a framework to direct decision-making to determine on-going management of the land.

### ***Priorities and Staging***

Some of the key initiatives for the Park in this fifteen-year timeframe include:

- Complete the Expression of Interest process to determine the future management of the farm setting and activities at Horseshoe Bend.
- Promote visitor appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the Park through the provision of increased education and interpretation opportunities.
- Implement environmental programs focused on the protection and enhancement of habitats for known national, state and regionally threatened species, as well as JAMBA / CAMBA species.
- Implement a system of conservation priorities to connect strategic habitat gaps between existing patches of remnant vegetation.
- Manage coordinated pest plant and animal control programs and vegetation restoration strategies in conjunction with other agencies and adjoining landowners.
- Facilitate environmental programs through partnerships with tertiary institutions, Brimbank City Council and Friends groups.
- Manage leases and licences in a manner that protects park values and achieves appropriate returns.

Other actions within the Future Directions Plan will be undertaken progressively, as the need arises and resourcing becomes available.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Background

This Future Directions Plan provides a ten to fifteen year strategic framework and clear direction for management of Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend. This plan builds on the outcomes of previous planning, the most recent of which was a “Setting Plan” in 1996 to guide management of the Park.

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend comprises a total of 361 hectares, of which 328.7 hectares forms Brimbank Park and 32.3 hectares forms Horseshoe Bend. The land was first acquired for public open space by the former Board of Works in 1974. It comprised the first stage of the Maribyrnong Valley Parklands and was opened in 1976. Horseshoe Bend Farm was opened to the public some years later.

Ownership of the Park and farm was transferred to Melbourne Parks and Waterways (MPW) in 1994 following its separation from Melbourne Water (formerly Board of Works). Upon the creation of Parks Victoria and the wind-up of Melbourne Parks and Waterways, all MPW land transferred to the state in 2001 to be reserved as Crown Land under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 for the purposes of conservation, recreation, tourism and leisure. Melbourne Water is responsible for management of the bed and banks of the Maribyrnong River.

The *Maribyrnong Valley Metropolitan Park Master Plan* was published in 1977 and guided early development of the Park. The *Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend Farm Setting Plan* was subsequently produced in 1996. The Setting Plan is now replaced by this Future Directions Plan.

Brimbank Park has been successively developed both in terms of visitor facilities and environmental rehabilitation over the last thirty years. The Park has been progressively

enhanced from an environmentally degraded and highly modified state to a major metropolitan recreational park in an attractive setting.

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend are located within the Brimbank City Council local government area. However it also draws visitors from other municipalities within Melbourne’s western suburbs. These municipalities are experiencing a small but steady growth rate in population, either by the subdivision of former farmland into new housing estates or re-development of old industrial or quarry sites. This is likely to result in increased park visitation and demand for quality visitor services.

The Future Directions Plan will ensure that visitor and recreation opportunities are managed to protect the park’s significant natural and cultural heritage values.

The main objectives of the Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend Future Directions Plan are to:

- Set strategic management directions;
- Identify management zones to guide decision making regarding appropriate current and future use; and
- Outline key Park-wide and Management Zone actions.

## 1.2 Location

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend are located along the Maribyrnong River valley some 15 kilometres north west of Melbourne and comprise the key components of the Maribyrnong Valley Parklands. The land extends from the Trestle Railway Bridge in the south to the Old Calder Highway in the north (Map 1 - Locality Map).

Brimbank Park provides visitors with a diverse range of recreational opportunities, whilst Horseshoe Bend has provided a farm setting in an urban environment.

The Park contains areas of significant conservation value, which provide important habitat for a range of flora and fauna species within the urban area. The Maribyrnong River provides a habitat corridor for the movement of many species.

### 1.3 Regional Context

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend are an important component of the open space network servicing the western suburbs. The most recent visitor counts from 2001 indicate that approximately 450,000 people visit Brimbank Park and 141,000 visit Horseshoe Bend each year.

The nearest parks to Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend that serve a regional open space function are Green Gully Reserve, Lower Maribyrnong Valley Parklands, Woodlands Historic Park, Organ Pipes National Park, Greenvale Reservoir Park, Pipemakers Park and Westgate Park

Brimbank Park complements other existing areas of open space that serve a local and district function including Keilor Park Recreation Reserve, Spring Gully Reserve, A J Davis Reserve and Keilor Recreation Reserve.

The Maribyrnong River Trail (shared bicycle and pedestrian pathway), which runs through the Park, forms part of the Metropolitan Trail Network. This will ultimately provide links via the proposed Taylors Creek and Maribyrnong River trails from the Organ Pipes National Park to the Bay Trail on the coast, as well as trail connections along the Maribyrnong River, Steele Creek and the Kororoit Creek.

The City of Brimbank is investigating the development of land for a new park along

Jacksons Creek and the Maribyrnong River to be known as Sydenham Park.

The City of Brimbank is currently experiencing a small but steady annual growth. Population forecasts confirm that this is likely to continue. The major source of increased visitation will arise from new housing created by the redevelopment of old industrial or quarry sites as Brimbank and nearby Moonee Valley municipalities are mostly developed.

New urban development over the next twenty years is planned to occur within one of the five growth areas designated in *Melbourne 2030*. In this region, these growth areas are five to fifteen kilometres from Brimbank Park. (See Map 1- Locality Map) The nearby Caroline Springs growth area is experiencing the fastest population increase within the western region with an average annual population increase of 18.15%.

Planning has commenced to provide regional parks within the western suburban growth areas of Caroline Springs, Melton and Hume. The State Government's Open Space Strategy prepared by Parks Victoria, *Linking People and Spaces* has identified the need to secure and develop land for open space to address a current inequity in access to regional open space and to cater for the significant growth over the next twenty years. *Melbourne 2030* confirms this commitment to provide this additional open space.

These new parks will complement the existing open space network. Each park provides its own unique setting and recreational opportunities as well as providing important extensions to open space linkages.

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend will continue to remain a vital part of this urban framework, providing a green open space and transition area for the surrounding urban communities. Its function as a focus for family and social recreation in natural settings will contribute to the communities health and well being as well as contributing environmentally

to clean air, habitat bio-links, flood control and water filtration.

#### 1.4 Planning Process

The first management plan for the Park was the *Maribyrnong Valley Metropolitan Park Master Plan* produced by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in 1977. This plan guided early development of the Park.

Melbourne Parks and Waterways produced the *Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend Farm Setting Plan in 1996*. This plan is now considered outdated, hence the preparation of this Future Directions Plan. This is the next stage of strategically planning for the future of the Park.

The process for developing the final Future Directions Plan comprised seven stages:

- Research and analysis, including a review of previous reports and plans;
- Preparation and distribution of a Discussion Paper to facilitate community consultation;
- Defining guiding principles and strategic directions;
- Developing management zones and actions;
- Preparation and distribution of a draft Future Directions Plan for public comment;
- Revision of the draft Future Directions Plan in response to written submissions and
- Endorsement of a final Future Directions Plan.

This Plan was prepared in consultation with the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Melbourne Water, local government, other land managers, stakeholders and the wider community.

Numerous other studies and publications produced over the years have also informed this Plan. In particular, the draft *Brimbank Park Environmental Management Plan July 1996* and *Brimbank Park Education and Interpretation Plan December 2001* provided important background information.

Initially a Discussion Paper was on exhibition for a period of eight weeks for public comment. Twenty groups and individuals made submissions about park values and their visions for the Park.

The main points raised in submissions were in relation to:

- Creation of additional trails and links to other areas of open space and nearby trails beyond the park boundary;
- Consultation and involvement of the community in the planning, development and management of the Park;
- Responsibility for maintenance of facilities and the environment and
- Ongoing park management issues including the management of user conflicts and inappropriate behaviour.

The issues raised in the submissions for the Discussion Paper were considered in the preparation of the Draft Future Directions Plan.

The Draft Future Directions Plan was on exhibition for a period of eighteen weeks for public comment. One hundred and twenty-six submissions were received from groups and individuals. In addition children's drawings and petitions were received in support of the farm.

The main points raised in the submissions related to:

- the future of the farm at Horseshoe Bend;
- ongoing park management issues and

- linking the park to other regional district and local open space via trails.

Public submissions to the draft plan were considered in the context of the policy frameworks and the priorities of the state government. The draft plan was revised where appropriate to reflect the consideration of these issues in the final Future Directions Plan.

This final Future Directions Plan provides an important decision making framework for determining appropriate use of the park for the next ten to fifteen years.

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## 2 CURRENT STATUS OF THE PARK

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### 2.1 Regional Open Space and Linkages

The Park is a significant area of open space, which provides a diverse range of passive recreation opportunities for local and regional visitors, as well as protecting regionally significant landscape, environmental and cultural values. The Maribyrnong River provides visitors with an important opportunity for water based activities such as fishing and canoeing within the western suburbs of Melbourne.

The City of Brimbank *Open Space Plan* states there are over 500 open spaces in the municipality. Most of these areas provide local or district level open space. Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend provides visitors with a regional open space experience encompassing expansive landscapes and facilities catering both for large groups and more intimate riverside experiences.

Together these areas provide opportunities for formal and informal recreation and enhance the local green open space network.

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend comprise the northern part of the Maribyrnong Valley Parklands, which extends downstream on the eastern bank to Lily Street, Essendon West. This stretch of open space is interspersed with several reserves managed by the Council. The corridor of open space along the river continues for a total of 23 kilometres to Footscray.

The eastern side of the Maribyrnong River is characterised by continuous green spaces. Habitat and open space connectivity is being progressively enhanced on the western side of the river as urban redevelopment occurs.

In particular the re-development of a former quarry site, now known as “River Valley

Estate” will result in the transfer of a significant riparian area for management by Parks Victoria. The potential rehabilitation of the Sunshine Quarry at Kealba will also provide the opportunity to enhance the open space network along the river. Downstream, the re-development of a large tract of Commonwealth land will also bring additional riverside land and recreational activity into the public domain.

The Maribyrnong River Trail mainly follows the eastern riverbank, with occasional links from side streets and connections from the opposite bank. There is the opportunity to further build on these linkages at a local level.

The close proximity to Keilor Township and the Kealba residential area provides opportunities for local pedestrian and cycling access. Public transport is not readily accessible to the Park and most visitors travel by car.

Although the major transport routes provide vehicular access to the Park, (east-west being the Calder Freeway and north south Keilor Park Drive and the Western Ring Road) they also create barriers to easy pedestrian access.

### 2.2 Park Identity

The Maribyrnong Valley is a popular recreational corridor. Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend are an important component of this corridor. At this location the Maribyrnong River features prominently as the river bend almost circles Horseshoe Bend and a wider sweep rings Brimbank Park.

The green open space provides a visual transition and contrast to the housing development on either side. The adjoining Green Gully Reserve to the north-west and market gardens to the north complement the

green open space created by the Park. This sense of space is an important value and is a key factor in the attractiveness and liveability of the surrounding area.

The Park has significant landscape values being a valley cut into overlying volcanic basalt plains dissected by the Maribyrnong River and Taylors Creek. Within this valley, including the river and the escarpment, there are significant native vegetation remnants, important archaeological sites and notable 19<sup>th</sup> century European occupation sites. It is in the valley “bowl” along the river where the main recreation nodes are located.

The encircling ridges of the escarpment create a natural amphitheatre that provides panoramic views both within the Park and to the surrounding region. The eastern boundary of the Park at the Overview car park area adjacent to Keilor Park Drive offers extensive views across Keilor township towards the Macedon Ranges.

The section of the park accessed by the main entrance from Keilor Park Drive presents an open vista of grassy plains that invites the visitor to continue through down to the sheltered valley along the river.

Horseshoe Bend currently provides the opportunity for visitors to experience a farm in an attractive sheltered setting with extensive trees and amenities to enhance the visitor experience.

The riparian vegetation along the Maribyrnong River and Taylors Creek and pockets of remnant vegetation and wetlands, are key features of the open space network. Together they represent an important visual link throughout the length of the park.

### 2.3 Environment Values

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend contain a range of natural and semi-natural environments

supporting patches of remnant vegetation with variable levels of intactness.

There are four broad Ecological Vegetation Communities present, Flood Plain Riparian Woodland (21 hectares), Grassy Wetland (3 hectares), Plains Grassland (14 hectares) and Rocky Outcrop Shrubland (15 hectares). Parks Victoria’s environmental strategies and priorities reflect the varied values of these specific areas.

In total there are around 53 hectares of indigenous vegetation, 32 hectares of which are remnant and the remaining area reflects the extensive revegetation program that has been undertaken. The area of indigenous vegetation comprises almost 15% of the total area of Brimbank Park.

The re-planting program that has been conducted since 1976 has transformed a highly de-graded site. The objective has been to create an attractive landscape setting for visitors through re-vegetation programs and maintaining pest plant and animal controls rather than recreating former vegetation communities.

The 17 separate areas of indigenous vegetation are quite fragmented. Most areas are less than 5 hectares each. Nearly 24 hectares is contained within the riparian areas along the Maribyrnong River and the remaining 29 hectares is in small patches of native grassland and rocky outcrop shrubland.

The Plains Grassland communities are characterised either by *Dichanthium sericeum* (Silky Blue-grass), *Bothriochloa macra* (Red-leg Grass), *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass) and *Pimelea glauca* (Smooth Rice flower) with a scattered middle storey of *Hymenantha dentata* (Tree Violet) and *Bursaria spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria). A few canopy trees comprising *Acacia implexa* (Lightwood) and *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping She-oak) also form part of these communities.

The river corridor comprises Riparian Woodland and contain *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum), *Bursaria Spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria), *Hymenthera Dentata* (Tree Violet), *Acacia dealbata* (Silver Wattle) and *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood) with groundflora dominated by *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass) and *Poa labillardieri* (Tussock-grass).

An extensive middle storey including *Viminaria juncea* (Golden Spray), *Leptospermum lanigerum* (Woolly Tea-tree), *Callistemon sieberi* (Alpine Bottlebrush) and *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) adjoining the river dominates the two areas of Grassy Wetland. The wetland area to the south has been invaded by largely exotic groundflora, primarily *Phalaris tuberosa* (Canary-grass).

More elevated areas of the Park support patches of Rocky Outcrop Shrubland which is dominated by a variety of Acacias with some groupings of *Bursaria Spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria). Some of these areas have also been severely invaded by *Phalaris tuberosa*.

The botanical values of the Park include:

- A flora diversity of 348 species which is classified in the lower category of species diversity. However 8 of these are listed as threatened in Victoria.
- Three of the floral species within the park are classified as rare, one vulnerable and one depleted.
- The Western (Basalt) Plains Grassland community is listed under the FFG Act 1988.

The fauna values of the Park include:

- A medium fauna diversity of 135 species, comprising 101 birds, 11 mammals, 12 reptiles, 8 frogs and 3 fish.
- The presence of 7 threatened species in Victoria, 2 of which are nationally threatened.
- The aquatic habitats of the Maribyrnong River and its associated floodplain

wetlands support the Nationally significant fish, the Australian Grayling (*Prototroctes maraena*) and Spotted Galaxias (*Galaxias pusilla*).

- The vulnerable Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*) may exist amongst the Remnant Plain Grasslands above the river escarpment at Kealba, but has not been recorded.
- Two rare bird species Lewin's Rail and Little Bittern have been recorded in the park.

These values clearly attest to the Park's significance as a wildlife corridor, created in part by the series of linked parks along the Maribyrnong River.

It is also noteworthy that the park plays a role in providing habitat for a migratory bird species. One Japan Australia Migratory Bird Agreement / China Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA/CAMBA) species has been recorded in the park.

The park is within the Maribyrnong River Catchment, which begins on the slopes of Mount Macedon and flows to Port Phillip Bay. The water quality in Maribyrnong River is classed as moderate, but Streamwatch reports indicate that at times the biological health of the river was relatively poor. This suggests that factors other than water quality are also influencing the occurrence and distribution of aquatic biota in these streams. The wetlands along the river system provide a natural filtration system, as well as creating significant habitat for aquatic species.

Maribyrnong River is an important waterway within an urban environment and consequently is a high priority for Melbourne Water in terms of work programs and funding. Melbourne Water has already undertaken extensive rehabilitation works along the Maribyrnong River, including weed control and bank stabilisation. Facilitating the passage of fish within the river has been addressed through the construction of two fish ladders, including one at Brimbank Park and the construction of a weir upstream. The current practice of not

removing fallen trees and logs from the river enhances the aquatic habitat for fish, however this practice will need to be monitored to ensure the trees do not present an unreasonable hazard to canoeists on the river. Melbourne Water is responsible for the removal of any debris in the river.

Melbourne Water has also initiated a program where funding is available for private landowners to undertake riparian restoration works including willow removal which will benefit riparian conditions downstream in the Park.

The riparian area along the Maribyrnong River also provides a refuge for wildlife. This is becoming increasingly important as nearby land is converted to urban uses. Such corridors facilitate movement and dispersal of fauna across areas that may otherwise be isolated, therefore helping to retain genetic diversity within species. Prior to development of the park, the area had been extensively farmed and the only remaining areas of high conservation value were located in areas not readily accessible by livestock. Hence at the inception of the park, there was little remnant vegetation and the majority of the grasslands were extensively degraded.

As revegetation has been carried out, wildlife has returned to the area. There have been an increased number of sightings of swamp wallabies and kangaroos.

Historical photographs clearly attest to the success in establishing extensive tree cover in a number of selected areas. Trials in re-establishing native grasses have also been undertaken, but this has had less success due to recurring exotic groundcover pest plants and the associated high levels of maintenance.

Weed control continues to be an on-going environmental issue. Some areas of the escarpment were highly degraded with infestations of boxthorn. This weed has been progressively cleared in a manner that minimises erosion. The steep grades of the

escarpment areas present particular problems in respect to re-vegetation and maintenance. Serrated tussock and *Phalaris* are also major threats that must be continually addressed.

An on-going problem with weed control within the park is infestations on neighbouring properties. If these weeds are not addressed, neighbouring properties can harbour extensive weed seed banks. Unless a weed has been prohibited under state legislation, there is no compulsion for a landowner to address this problem. Flooding can also spread weeds through the riparian areas of the park as they can be carried from upstream infestations.

Similar issues are associated with pest animal control. Currently partnerships exist with adjoining land managers to address rabbits, a good example of the success that can be achieved through a co-operative “Good Neighbour” approach.

Other environmental issues relate to damage from stormwater both in terms of drainage capacity within the park and from occurrences of illegal drainage connections from adjoining properties.

## **2.4 Cultural Heritage Values**

The Maribyrnong River and its tributaries were an important source of food and materials for the Aboriginal people of the western plains.

Archaeological surveys at Keilor indicate that aboriginal occupation extends back 40,000 years, making it among the oldest known human inhabited sites in Victoria.

Human remains and artefacts estimated to be 8,000 years old were found in the vicinity of the Kulin Wetlands at Green Gully. In 1940, a 15,000-year-old Aboriginal skull was found during excavation of a sandpit on Dry Creek near the Maribyrnong River in Keilor. Further investigations have unearthed evidence of campsites, which formed part of one of the oldest human habitations in Australia.

This area is in the traditional land of the Wurundjeri, a people of the Woiwurrung language group who in turn belonged to the larger Kulin nation. Maribyrnong is an anglicised version of the Aboriginal term 'Mirring-gnay-bir-nong', which translates as 'I can hear a ringtail possum'.

The riverbends that make up Brimbank Park today would have made a particularly good living place for Wurundjeri, and there are many locations within the park indicating sites of occupation, including scar trees and quarries.

Park visitors have expressed considerable interest in the indigenous history of the area and there is a significant opportunity for interpretation of this history to be extended in consultation with AAV and representatives of the local indigenous community.

Charles Grimes and James Fleming surveyed the lower reaches of the Maribyrnong River in 1803. It was formerly known as Saltwater River before its present name came into common usage.

From the early 1840s the area was divided into many grazing properties that supplied the Melbourne market with sheep and cattle. The sheltered grassy plains and woodlands and supply of water from the river provided ideal conditions. Since the 1880's dairy farmers, orchards and market gardens replaced much of the grazing in the valley and the township of Keilor was established adjacent to the river crossing.

In 1851, the discovery of gold in the Castlemaine region resulted in an influx of people from all over the world and led to the substantial growth of Keilor, which was en-route to the goldfields. Downstream around Footscray, the establishment of numerous industries along the river to service the increased population resulted in a severe reduction in water quality and degradation of riparian environments.

In 1854 the land currently occupied by the Park was known as Keilor Village Reserve. It was used for communal grazing and for the use of travellers passing through. From 1854 until the early 1900s the land was subdivided and was owned by a variety of landowners. In 1907 the Dodd family bought the area that became known as Brimbank Farm. The name "Brimbank" derives from the practice of local farmers who would drive stock "*around the brim of the bank*" of the Maribyrnong River.

In the early 1900s William O'Neil Jnr purchased Horseshoe Bend to be used as a dairy farm. After O'Neil's death in the 1930s the farm was subdivided into 3-5 acre lots. During this time there were various owners and the land was mostly used for orchards and market gardens. Market gardens still exist north of the park today, taking advantage of the rich river terraces.

Evidence of this early European heritage can be found within the park area. This includes Dodds cottage (1860s & 1880s) the Dodds tomato shed, the remains of early pioneer stone walls, remnants of old orchards, cypress trees windbreaks, the remains of Borrell's cottage and the bluestone remains of the old homestead known as Dodds ruins near the Western Ring Road.

Bridges crossing the Maribyrnong River form an important aspect of the park's heritage. There are two bridges existing within the park boundary. The 1927 Trestle Bridge in the south-east corner of the park carries the Melbourne – Sydney passenger and freight railway. For many years it was the longest and highest railway bridge in Australia. It stands higher above water than the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The EJ Whitten bridge was built in 1995 as part of the Western Ring Road. Travellers often obtain their first views of Brimbank from the bridges.

Another bridge adjacent to the park is the old road alignment of Keilor Road. This heritage 1868 bridge is just to the north of Borrells ruins and the park boundary. The bridge links

the walking trails from Keilor Village at Caroline Chisholm Park to Brimbank Park.

## 2.5 Visitor and Recreation Values

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend attracts a variety of visitors. The most recent visitor counts from 2001 indicate that approximately 450,000 people visit Brimbank Park and 141,000 visit Horseshoe Bend each year. A diverse range of visitors are drawn to the particular activities available. Families comprise a high proportion of visitors to Horseshoe Bend Farm, whilst larger social groups are drawn to the picnic facilities available within Brimbank Park. School groups are frequent users of the park and opportunities exist to extend this usage.

The existing park infrastructure such as the playgrounds, picnic and barbecue areas, visitor centre and extensive trail network reflects the developed and long established nature of the park.

The Park offers a variety of settings: open grasslands, escarpments with views, access to a riparian environment, secluded bush retreats and trails linkages along the valley. These settings provide for a diverse range of passive recreational experiences such as walking, jogging, cycling, fishing, canoeing, bird watching, nature appreciation, picnicking and socialising.

Additional complementary visitor services and attractions, such as the Leaping Lizard Café are currently provided by private businesses.

The Maribyrnong River is a key feature and attraction of the park for visitors. It is important in providing a corridor that has a dual role in respect of the environmental and recreational opportunities it offers. This setting is enhanced by the combination of contrasts between the steep escarpments and the river valley. Opportunities for fishing and canoeing along the river exist from the river fords located within the park.

Parks Victoria conducts visitor satisfaction surveys at a number of key parks throughout the State. The results for Brimbank Park are documented in *The Visitor Satisfaction Monitor 2003 Brimbank Park*. Surveys were conducted at carpark A and B. Key findings of the survey are:-

- The majority of visitors (73%) come from the western suburbs of Melbourne.
- The average length of stay in the park was 4.2 hours
- 82% of visitors had visited the park previously, with the average number of visits in the last twelve months being 20.5. This suggests a strong component of local usage.
- The majority of visitors to Brimbank Park were there to attend an occasion or major event, consequently the average party size was relatively large. In carpark A the average size was 41.9 and Carpark B, 15.4.
- Visitors stated that there was a need for shaded areas and shelter, and for improved barbecues, picnic facilities and better rubbish management.

Aspects of the park most enjoyed by visitors in Carpark A were the areas of open space and space for ball games (40%) followed by peace and quiet away from traffic (30%) proximity to home (24%) and walking tracks (24%). At Carpark B the feeling of open space with opportunities for ball games (32%) was the aspect most enjoyed by park visitors followed by the proximity to home (10%) and then the feeling of bush (10%).

Anecdotal evidence confirms that the Maribyrnong River Trail is a key attractor that is becoming increasingly popular as it draws people from inner Melbourne along the Maribyrnong River to the current destination of Brimbank Park.

The unique landforms, with areas of the park set in a natural amphitheatre many metres below the surrounding basalt plain means it offers a sense of seclusion where visitors can appreciate a feeling of remoteness.

The basalt plain plateau area of the park accessed from escarpment trails and lookouts provides excellent views to surrounding areas and overlooks the escarpment, and rocky outcrops towards the riparian vegetation, mature red gums and riverine environment.

The natural landscapes and park infrastructure together provide extensive opportunities for various forms of passive recreation. Picnicking is one of the major activities undertaken in the park. There are three main picnic areas, each has carparking, tables, shelters, barbeques, toilet facilities and children's play equipment.

Pedestrian access exists for neighbouring residential areas at park maintenance entrance gates located at twelve locations on the edges of the park. During times of low water levels the three existing fords facilitate access from the surrounding residential areas across the river into the main parts of the park.

Horseshoe Bend Farm currently contains a children's farm, housing a range of farm animals. The farm features a weatherboard 1930s cottage with a cottage garden and attractive farm buildings built to reflect the early farming era. Picnic facilities are also available and a 2 kilometre scenic walking track runs along the edge of the western bank of the Maribyrnong River.

*The Brimbank Parks Setting Plan, MPW 1996*, proposed the construction of a bridge from Brimbank Park to Horseshoe Bend to serve pedestrians and light vehicles such as a "people transporter". It was intended that this bridge would become the main access to the farm.

Since the release of the Setting Plan, Parks Victoria has been created and park organisational responsibilities have shifted from a metropolitan focus to a state-wide context. Numerous bridge designs and funding options have been explored. However, the cost of construction of a bridge by Parks Victoria is

prohibitive within this context of statewide responsibilities.

A consultation process regarding the bridge was undertaken between neighbouring residents, Parks Victoria and Brimbank City Council. Opportunities to seek external funding for the bridge was explored without success.

Accordingly, the bridge will not be constructed by Parks Victoria as was previously proposed under the Setting Plan.

It is proposed by Parks Victoria that the low-key farm setting will be retained at Horseshoe Bend.

Parks Victoria is currently managing the farm at Horseshoe Bend. This is an interim measure while Parks Victoria conducts an Expression of Interest process for the future management of the farm. Through this process, Parks Victoria will investigate potential community and commercial opportunities to provide managed low key farm activities and other passive recreational opportunities such as those that are currently available at Horseshoe Bend.

## **2.6 Land Management**

The land comprises Crown land reserved for conservation, recreation, leisure, and tourism purposes.

The two land managers are Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water, however other agencies have utility infrastructure within the park that requires access for maintenance purposes.

Melbourne Water is responsible for managing the beds and banks of the Maribyrnong River.

Adjoining the entrance to the park is the Keilor Transmission Station. High voltage transmission lines traverse the park from the Keilor Transmission station to Melbourne's

west. Gas pipelines are located underground alongside Keilor Rd adjacent to the northern boundary of the park. A High-pressure petroleum pipeline runs alongside the railway easement through the south-eastern corner of the park. A sewerage treatment plant is located near the visitors' centre.

Large sections of the park adjoin residential development on the top of the escarpment. The extensive park boundary interface with private land presents specific management issues. Engaging in partnerships with adjoining landowners to address specific problems is a useful means to achieve a comprehensive land management approach that crosses land tenure boundaries.

An unserviced industrial estate with land titles extending to the escarpment and in some instances into the river valley is located on the western side of the river at Sunshine North opposite Brimbank Park. Brimbank Council has undertaken a project to introduce services and upgrade this industrial zone.

Cooperative partnerships between public land managers and private landowners using land management practises that protect and enhance the Park's environmental and cultural values will continue to be encouraged. Land management issues include:

- Wildfire prevention and management, an area of particular concern is the steep escarpments;
- Flood mitigation; the river valley is low-lying and the 10-year flood line is above substantial areas of the park;
- Water quality management, as erosion and drainage into Maribyrnong River along the length of the valley impacts upon the water flowing into Port Phillip Bay;
- Collaborative pest plant and animal control with adjacent landowners;
- Provision of complementary passive recreation opportunities;
- A commitment to minimising any adverse impacts from development on adjoining land.

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## 3 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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### 3.1 Vision

*Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend provides a panoramic open space along the Maribyrnong River in which visitors can relax to enjoy a range of recreational settings, facilities and opportunities including natural bushland, open and sheltered recreation spaces and dramatic landscapes in an urban setting, contributing significantly to the health and well being of the community and natural ecological processes.*

### 3.2 The Role of the Park

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend is one of the most significant metropolitan parks in Melbourne's west. It provides attractive settings along the Maribyrnong River to enable park visitors to enjoy and experience nature while undertaking recreational activities in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

The Park provides park visitors with a diversity of recreational experiences. The variety of settings from grassland escarpments with extensive views to secluded picnic areas, encourage passive recreational experiences such as walking, jogging, cycling, fishing, canoeing, bird watching, nature appreciation, picnicking and socialising.

The Park links open space along the Maribyrnong River creating an environmental and recreational corridor, protecting natural and cultural heritage values and provides the setting for a variety of interpretation and recreational opportunities for the culturally diverse population of Melbourne's western suburbs.

Brimbank Park is both a destination from and a link between the metropolitan trail network and other open spaces in the region. Brimbank Park's trail connections to other open spaces

reinforces its distinct role in the regional open space network.

The extensive indigenous planting and restoration works increases and maintains connections between remnant flora and fauna communities to protect and enhance environmental values of the park and create connections between visitors and natural settings in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Brimbank Park plays a significant role in protecting both indigenous and farming heritage within an urban setting in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

### 3.3 Guiding Principles

The guiding principles from Melbourne's open space strategy, *Linking People and Spaces* underpins Parks Victoria's future directions for Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend. These principles relate to the entire metropolitan open space network and provide the framework and rationale for the park-wide and specific management zone actions for the Park.

These include:

Partnerships. This principle is fundamental to the management of the Park, and involves public and private agencies, volunteers and the wider community.

Diversity. Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend provide diverse recreational opportunities for its visitors in a variety of environments and landscapes.

Equity. The Park will be managed to ensure it is accessible to all parts of the community and managed for inclusive use; exclusive uses will be discouraged.

Flexibility and Responsiveness. It is important that Park management responds to changing and emerging community needs and trends.

Sustainability. It is important for future generations that the Park be managed

sustainably in respect to environmental, recreation and financial considerations.

Other strategies that guide the overall framework include *Melbourne 2030* and the Brimbank Planning Scheme.

*Melbourne 2030* contains The Parklands Code: Urban Open Space Principles. The aim of this code is to sustain the benefits of open space into the future and to support the broad strategies and actions of *Linking People and Spaces*. The code stipulates guidelines for the planning and management of open space. The government commits to these principles for urban open space managed by Parks Victoria.

Under the Brimbank Planning Scheme the park is zoned as a Public Park and Recreation Zone. This reflects the primarily recreational role of the park. The park is subject to an Airport Environs Overlay, which reflects the high level of aircraft noise in this vicinity. The area adjacent to the Maribyrnong River includes a Land Subject to Inundation Overlay, which reflects recurring flood levels. Brimbank Council has developed an Aboriginal and post-contact heritage strategy, which will result in the application of additional heritage overlays within Brimbank Park.

### **3.4 Strategic Directions**

The guiding principles, role and the current status of the park inform the strategic directions that will guide park-wide and management actions to achieve and maintain the vision and role of the park.

The Strategic Directions for Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend are outlined below:

#### **3.4.1 Regional Context & Linkages**

Brimbank Park has a distinct regional role and will continue to be managed as a major regional open space providing recreational opportunities for Melbourne's western suburbs.

Facilities and services maintained and provided at Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend will complement the recreational offer in other open space in the region, including other new regional parks to be developed in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend will continue to be managed as a major recreation destination on the Maribyrnong River Trail and a major interchange between other sections of the existing and proposed Metropolitan Trail Network.

The trail network connecting the Park to Lower Maribyrnong Valley Parklands, will be maintained and enhanced and linked with future open space development.

#### **3.4.2 Park Character**

The characteristic riparian River Red Gums, escarpments and Western Plains Grasslands found within the park will be preserved and where appropriate enhanced. The vegetated corridor along the river valley should be maintained whilst promoting the recreational opportunities offered by the extensive riverside trail network.

The distinctive character of Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend will be protected and enhanced through sensitive design of any new or upgraded facilities with appropriate siting and landscaping.

Appreciation and understanding of the characteristics of the western landscape of Melbourne that exists at Brimbank Park should be promoted to park visitors and across the region

#### **3.4.3 Natural Environment**

Flora and fauna species of National, State and Regional significance and sites of geomorphological significance associated with the Maribyrnong River system will be protected, maintained and enhanced in

accordance with the Parks Victoria's Conservation Objectives and identified values in each management zone.

The natural values of the Park will also be protected and enhanced as the park fulfils its role as part of the Maribyrnong River catchment and habitat corridor and as part of the broader catchment for Port Phillip.

The bio-diversity and range of natural features will be managed through environmental programs based on sound ecological principles.

Natural history, environmental processes and management practises will be promoted to the community through interpretation and education.

#### **3.4.4 Cultural Heritage**

The cultural heritage values and archaeological sites will be protected in accordance with relevant legislation, Parks Victoria's Indigenous Guidelines and through an agreed process of consultation with the local aboriginal community and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV).

Non-indigenous heritage values will be protected and enhanced in line with Parks Victoria's Heritage Management Strategy.

Community awareness about the importance of Aboriginal and post-European contact heritage will be achieved through interpretation, information and promotion.

#### **3.4.5 Park Visitors**

Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend will continue to offer a range of recreational experiences and facilities that respect the park values and character, and contribute to the health and well being of the community.

The diversity of the community's needs including both mobility issues and cultural

requirements will be assessed when considering new or upgraded facilities or services, consistent with the guiding principles of the Parklands Code.

Sustainable "Best Practise" principles including Parks Victoria's Facilities Design Manual, Australian Standards and feasibility studies will be applied to the location, design and construction or renewal of park facilities.

Visitation and recreational activities will continue to be managed on an environmentally and socially sustainable basis through park management and design of new or upgraded visitor facilities and services.

#### **3.4.6 Management Partnerships**

Cooperative Partnerships with other government agencies, local government, community groups and other nearby landowners will be encouraged to achieve the park management objectives, including visitor safety and pest plant and pest animal management.

The management of the Maribyrnong River in the park requires partnerships with the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority and Melbourne Water. This will enable integrated management of the riparian corridor to facilitate funding for riparian rehabilitation and interpretation along the Maribyrnong River.

Community involvement in the protection and enhancement of the Park will be encouraged.

On-going liaison with other agencies will continue to be important to clarify land management responsibilities within the Park to reach agreement as to an appropriate maintenance regime.

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## 4 PARK-WIDE ACTIONS

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The main objectives of this plan are to provide strategic management directions and identify management zones and key actions to guide decision making regarding current and future uses within the park for the next 10 -15 years. This chapter outlines actions that apply generally to the Parklands as a whole, and Chapter 5 then outlines actions that are particular to a management zone defined within the parklands.

While these actions provide guidance on directions or issues that are current or have been anticipated through the planning process, it is acknowledged that ongoing management of the Park occurs within a changing social, political and economic environment.

The plan is therefore also intended to be used as a decision making framework to respond to proposals and issues that may arise in the future that are not specifically addressed within the plan. In this regard, the vision and role of the Park, the strategic directions, and the role and purpose of the specific management zones affected provide the decision making framework and criteria by which an appropriate response to the proposal or issue will be assessed.

### 4.1 Regional Open Space and Linkages

- Upgrade the existing trail link between the Maribyrnong River Trail and the Western Ring Road trail and clearly signpost the connecting links to other trails to ensure safe trail access.
- Work with local government and land developers to enhance existing trail links and investigate opportunities for new links between the park and local open space areas and community facilities. In the *medium to long term* the following priorities include:
  - Organ Pipes National Park via Taylors Creek.
  - Organ Pipes National Park via Maribyrnong River.
  - Keilor Park Recreation Reserve.
  - Future residential subdivisions (eg *River Valley Estate*).
  - Assess the existing network of trails within the Park with disability service groups to ensure that an adequate number of trails are suitable for disabled access.
  - Assess and rationalise where necessary the existing trail network to maximise visitor access to a diversity of landscapes and experiences within the Park.
  - Increase community awareness of the recreational, environmental and cultural values of Brimbank Park & Horseshoe Bend to promote the diversity of visitor opportunities in the region.
  - When planning for the provision of new facilities and activities, consider complementary with existing recreational opportunities in adjacent municipalities.
  - Maintain appropriate access to the park from surrounding residential areas.

### 4.2 Park Character

- Ensure the character of different park zones are reflected in appropriate education and interpretation initiatives.
- Minimise the impact of any further easements or utility structures on park views, environmental or cultural values or the visitor experience through the development of partnerships with appropriate agencies.
- Continue to develop on-going partnerships with local government to ensure Parks Victoria staff input into assessment of development proposals on nearby land. Seek to minimise the impact of adjoining land uses and developments on the amenity of the Park.

- Support City of Brimbank to protect the Maribyrnong escarpment and river valley through an appropriate Environment Significance Overlay zoning.
- Liaise with local community groups and landowners to enhance community understanding of the role and character of the park.
- Promote appreciation and understanding of the character of the western landscapes in Melbourne.
- Ensure that any new or upgraded facilities complement the character of the management zone in which they are located.
- Ensure that any new development within the park does not compromise the extensive viewlines and viewsheds offered by the escarpments.

#### 4.3 Natural Environment

- Prioritise management of high conservation value sites, including those supporting threatened flora or fauna species and their habitats, and restoration of Ecological Vegetation Communities (EVCs).
- Protect and enhance habitats for known national, state and regionally threatened species, as well as JAMBA / CAMBA species utilising wetlands within the Park.
- Maintain and protect sites of geomorphological significance, in particular the escarpments and other features associated with the Maribyrnong River system.
- Liaise with Council to request an amendment to the Brimbank Planning Scheme to ensure the areas with high conservation values are rezoned to Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ).
- Utilise Parks Victoria Conservation Objectives to develop environmental work priorities for the Park, relating to:
  - Control of pest plants, pest animals and plant disease within the park and integrated programs in conjunction with agencies and adjacent landowners.
- Targeted management of significant flora and fauna species and vegetation communities, including research and ongoing monitoring.
- Mapping the extent and quality of vegetation communities and habitat condition.
- Surveying fauna, especially for the striped legless lizard.
- Encourage environmental research projects within the Park in collaboration with universities and other tertiary institutions.
- Work in collaboration with DSE, Melbourne Water, local government, adjoining landowners and the community to achieve integrated stream management along the Maribyrnong River. In particular focus on weed eradication, pest animal control, revegetation with indigenous species, fencing of remnant vegetation, and erosion control (especially in respect to bank slippage).
- Work with Melbourne Water and Brimbank City Council to ensure that stormwater is appropriately treated in line with *The Urban Stormwater Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines* (CSIRO 1999) before discharge into Maribyrnong River and its tributaries.
- Use the *Brimbank Park Education and Interpretation Plan December 2001* to educate park visitors, adjoining landowners and the local community about the Park's natural values including flora and fauna, geology and catchment hydrology, water quality and environmental management.
- Promote opportunities for bird watching within the Park, both from existing look out vantage points along the escarpment and within the riparian corridor.
- Manage the impact of urbanisation on stormwater run-off and encourage suitable drainage treatments in adjacent developments to protect the natural waterway function in partnership with appropriate regulatory agencies.

- Investigate opportunities where burns undertaken for fire management may result in enhanced environmental values.

#### 4.4 Cultural Heritage

- Ensure park management actions are undertaken in line with Parks Victoria's Indigenous Heritage Guidelines.
- Support archaeological surveys of the land managed by Parks Victoria in conjunction with local indigenous communities and AAV.
- Utilise existing archaeological information, or if necessary, undertake an additional archaeological survey prior to site works that involve significant soil disturbance in conjunction with local indigenous communities and AAV.
- Develop suitable interpretative material and information about the indigenous cultural heritage values in consultation with local indigenous communities, AAV and the Wurundjeri Tribal Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc
- Promote the historical and cultural indigenous significance of the park area through visitor information and interpretation, where possible using indigenous representatives.
- Develop a consistent theme for interpretation of all sites of significance to aboriginal people throughout the region, both within the park and in the context of sites outside the park.
- Prepare a conservation action plan for each of the Park's post-European contact assets in accordance with Parks Victoria's Heritage Management Strategy plan. Where appropriate, investigate adaptive re-use of culturally significant buildings that will contribute to the conservation and maintenance of the buildings and the site.
- Develop a consistent theme for interpretation of sites of post-European contact heritage consistent with Parks Victoria's Heritage Management Strategy. – *Settling the Port Phillip District.*

- Work with Council and local historical societies to develop links with other heritage sites outside the park such that a heritage trail with consistent interpretation within the region is provided.

#### 4.5 Park Visitors

- Continue to implement the recommendations of the Brimbank Park Education and Interpretation Plan December 2001. The theme for the Park is Brimbank is a cultural landscape.
- Promote the Park and the connecting Metropolitan Trail Network within the region through directional and entrance signage, Park Notes and regional trail brochures, information within the Visitors Centre and external tourism information venues.
- Maintain suitable access points, roads, trails and paths to cater for visitor vehicles, management and emergency vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, and people with disabilities.
- Continue to maintain the main visitor nodes to provide for passive recreational use, and minor visitor nodes to provide dispersed low-key activities.
- Continue to manage all assets and facilities within Park in accordance with the Parks Victoria Levels of Service frameworks.
- Provide information at main recreation nodes to inform visitors about the location of trails and amenities, and to promote appropriate visitor activities, behaviour and safety.
- Support an education program for responsible dog management in partnership with local government and monitor and ensure compliance with dog regulations.
- Work with other park managers and recreation service providers to promote the open space network for use by cycling or walking groups to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the community.
- Encourage responsible trail user behaviour by promoting the Users Code of Conduct for Cyclists.

- Monitor and assess the Park for any risks to visitors (eg illegal erection of rope swings over the river).
- Promote and encourage use of the Park by large groups through the week and other off-peak times when possible.
- Encourage local government to promote the use of a Council community bus to specific groups to provide access to Brimbank Park for groups who do not have access to a private car.
- Manage any festivals or events in such a manner that they do not adversely affect the environmental and cultural values of the park.
- Continue to manage any conflict between different recreational activities while providing opportunities for a diversity of visitor needs.
- Provide visitor facilities that are consistent with the values and role of the management zone through careful design of new or upgraded facilities, signage and structural elements in line with Parks Victoria's Facilities Design Manual.
- Develop relationships with local schools to encourage pupils to engage in environmental activities at Brimbank Park.
- Build community partnerships to encourage community involvement in park activities.
- Flood Management.
- Evacuation procedures.
- Encourage partnerships with management agencies, adjoining landowners, and community and user groups to facilitate complementary park management and detailed planning in line with this Future Directions Plan.
- Liaise with all relevant agencies such as the electricity supply company, Federal Airports Corporation, VicRoads and surrounding landowners to investigate opportunities for undertaking ecological burns that could enhance environmental values.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for wider community involvement in the ongoing protection, enhancement and interpretation of the Park through local Landcare, Community and Friends Groups.
- Ensure that an appropriate lease, licence or consent covers any existing or future public utilities on land managed by Parks Victoria and that such agreements contain clauses for protection of park values.
- Maintain partnerships with the City of Brimbank, the electricity supply company and Keilor Cemetery Trust and other nearby landowners to achieve a coordinated pest plant and animal control program.

#### **4.6 Management Partnerships**

- Maintain a Fire Management Plan in conjunction with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), DSE and local government. This plan should cover:
  - Fire control buffers.
  - Water access points.
  - Emergency vehicle accesses.
  - Location of facilities and trails.
- Maintain integrated Emergency Response procedures in conjunction with relevant public agencies. These procedures should incorporate:
  - Fire Management.
- Work with City of Brimbank and DSE to close existing unused road reserves within the Park to achieve consistent land tenure and management responsibility.
- Develop partnerships with universities and other tertiary institutions to undertake environmental and other appropriate research projects within the Park.
- Liaise with fishing groups to promote opportunities for sustainable fishing from the fishing platform at Brimbank Park while ensuring adherence to fishing regulations and responsible behaviour.
- Liaise with canoe groups to promote opportunities for canoeing at Brimbank Park.

- Liaise with bicycle groups to promote opportunities for cycling at Brimbank Park.
- Investigate in conjunction with City of Brimbank whether additional development controls should be introduced along the escarpment areas adjacent to the Park.

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## 5 MANAGEMENT ZONE FRAMEWORK AND ACTIONS

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Management zones have been defined to reflect the primary purpose and values of each area. The land within the Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend boundary has been divided into six management zones:

- Conservation.
- Conservation and Recreation.
- Landscape.
- Recreation.
- Special Use Zone A Park Services.
- Special Use Zone B Utilities.

The management zones provide a framework for directing decision-making and to determine how Parks Victoria will manage the land. The zones also provide a basis for assessing any lease or licence proposals within the parkland presented by private or community operators.

Special Use Zones have been applied in cases where the established use, such as the park office or sewage treatment plant is not compatible with the general park management zones.

Table 1 specifies the management zones and Map 2 shows their location.

### 5.1 Conservation

#### Purpose

**Protection, maintenance and enhancement of natural areas with significant habitat and environmental values.**

#### Description

The conservation zone applies to areas of remnant indigenous vegetation communities with significant environmental values. This zone encompasses most of the Maribyrnong

riparian area, remnant patches of grassland and rocky outcrop shrubland on the escarpment.

Sections of both the Maribyrnong riparian zone (including the grassy wetlands) and the grasslands have been degraded by erosion and vegetation removal. Revegetation has protected and connected some remnant communities. Weed presence poses major threats to environmental values in the park.

#### Role

- To conserve remaining natural areas to ensure regional biodiversity and protect the natural landscape for current and future generations.
- To protect and manage remnant vegetation communities and fauna habitats in the Park, particularly those with significant values.
- To protect and enhance the significant aquatic habitats and associated wetlands of the Maribyrnong River in conjunction with Melbourne Water.
- To recognise and protect archaeologically sensitive areas.
- To promote enjoyment of the bushland by providing opportunities for visitors to appreciate nature, learn about natural values and processes and experience tranquillity.

The recreational activities in this zone could include walking, contemplation, bird watching, fishing, canoeing and appreciating nature.

#### Actions

- Protect the remnant vegetation along the Maribyrnong River, its local catchment and other areas of conservation significance in the Park.
- Support linking natural remnant communities through sustainable revegetation programs that reflect

successional stages with the aim of restoring EVCs.

- Liaise with Melbourne Water to minimise escarpment and riverbank erosion to contribute to maintenance of the water quality reaching Port Phillip Bay from the Maribyrnong River.
- Investigate appropriate interpretation requirements for the Kulin Wetlands area with Melbourne Water.
- Manage shared use of the fishing platform to include canoe launching. Monitor use and impact of this activity in respect to potential environmental impact or user conflict.
- Monitor any fallen trees within Maribyrnong River in respect to impact on canoeists and consult with Melbourne Water regarding appropriate management.
- Monitor visitor impacts on the riverbank, riparian corridor and environmental values and undertake appropriate rehabilitation measures where required.
- Maintain partnerships with Melbourne Water who are the responsible agency for undertaking water quality testing and ensure appropriate warning signs are erected at times of poor water quality (eg blue-green algal blooms).

## 5.2 Conservation and Recreation

### Purpose

**Protection, maintenance and enhancement of areas with environmental values while providing suitable low intensity passive recreation opportunities.**

### Description

The conservation and recreation zone covers some parts of the riparian area and floodplain surrounding the Maribyrnong River. The zone applies to areas between the loop trail and river at Horseshoe Bend and behind the Visitors Centre around the Dodds heritage property and the plateau above the escarpment overlooking the sheltered valley of the Park. Some land within this zone is subject to flood inundation.

The area is highly valued as part of the wildlife corridor and for the significant in-stream and floodplain aquatic habitats.

This zone contains some areas of remnant vegetation, but these patches are isolated. The riparian corridor within the Maribyrnong valley is highly modified by the impacts of agriculture and areas south of the river have historically been used for quarrying.

A significant portion of the Maribyrnong River Trail is located within this zone.

### Role

- To protect and manage the important adjoining riparian values of the Maribyrnong River while providing opportunities for visitors to enjoy the environs, learn about natural values and catchment processes and experience views in and above the valley
- To protect and manage remnant vegetation communities and fauna habitats along the Maribyrnong valley, particularly those with significant values.
- Maintain existing visitor access to surrounding areas without conflicting with stream / flood management or environmental values.
- To recognise and protect archaeologically sensitive areas along the adjoining riparian corridor.
- Recreational activities that may be suited to this zone include walking, jogging, cycling, appreciating nature, and small group picnics.

### Actions

- Actively manage sites with high conservation values, including those supporting threatened flora or fauna species, aquatic habitats, and priority ecological vegetation communities (EVCs).
- Manage the park to achieve an appropriate balance between the provision of

recreational opportunities and the protection of conservation objectives.

- Monitor and maintain the condition of the Maribyrnong River Trail and connections to external trails to ensure appropriate standards are met.
- Provide opportunities for environmental and cultural interpretation along the trail alignments to enhance understanding of park values.
- Provide opportunities for informal low-key social interaction in natural and semi natural settings.

provide a visual perspective to the area's agricultural history.

- To enable visitors to experience the extensive panoramic views and appreciate the diverse landscape.
- To provide opportunities for visitors to experience areas of large open space and undertake passive recreation activities.

Suitable recreation activities that could occur within this zone include walking, jogging, cycling, informal recreation and appreciating the views.

### 5.3 Landscape

#### Purpose

**Maintain, protect and enhance areas with significant natural or rural landscape values, views and geographic features, while providing passive recreation opportunities.**

#### Description

The landscape zone is located above the escarpment areas of the Park. It includes the large flat plateau areas above the escarpment and the accessible slopes falling into the river valley. The topography of this area provides magnificent views in all directions, across sheltered valleys to the opposite escarpments and beyond Keilor township area to distant Mount Macedon and the Great Dividing Range.

Land within this zone is open undulating grassland reflecting the grazing history of the area. The open grassed nature of this zone contributes to the semi-rural landscape character.

This zone contains the "Overview Carpark" which is accessed from Keilor Park Drive and provides twenty four hour pedestrian access into the park.

#### Role

- To maintain the open landscape character of the area (near to the Green Wedge designated in Melbourne 2030) and to

#### Actions

- Actively manage areas adjacent to sites with high conservation values, including those supporting threatened flora or fauna species and priority ecological vegetation communities (EVCs).
- Monitor Overview Carpark for future assessment of capacity.
- Limit any additional built infrastructure to protect views and zone character.
- Identify opportunities to undertake appropriate landscaping works to screen undesirable visual intrusions without interrupting the expansive views to outside the park.
- Enhance the main park entrance on Keilor Park Drive in active partnership with VicRoads, Brimbank Council and other management agencies.
- Promote access from the shared pedestrian / cycle trails to the highest points of the escarpment to enable visitors to enjoy the panoramic views.
- Undertake ecological burns where appropriate in accordance with conservation objectives to manage conservation and landscape values.

## 5.4 Recreation

### Purpose

**Provision of a wide range of recreation opportunities catering for a relatively large number of visitors in a pleasant, semi-natural or developed parkland setting.**

### Description

The recreation zone includes two distinct areas. The northern recreation area is the core farm area in the loop of the river known as Horseshoe Bend. The southern Recreation area includes the current high usage picnic grounds (“A”, “B”, “C”) as well as the grass lawns.

Within this zone is the Visitors Centre which provides amenities and information to visitors as well as a small café area leased to commercial operators.

The zone also includes a grassed and fenced area of the de-commissioned sewerage treatment plant that will ultimately be available for recreational activities within the park. This site has been partly landscaped to allow for large scale and special events. A Master Plan was developed in 1998 to rehabilitate the site to allow usage for park purposes.

Within this zone, large areas have been modified by former farming use and they do not contain significant environmental values. Part of this zone is low lying and prone to flooding.

### Role

- To provide an attractive park setting and amenities to enable visitors to enjoy the outdoors and engage in passive recreation activities.
- To provide open areas for well serviced visitor nodes catering for large groups and more intense visitation.
- To provide recreation nodes with low-key visitor facilities for local residents and small groups.

- To manage remnant cultural heritage sites of farming heritage.
- To maintain diversity of recreational opportunities including existing complementary commercial services that benefit park visitors.

Activities that may be suitable in this zone include picnicking and barbeques, group socialising, occasional events, playing, children’s farm activities, informal games, walking, jogging and cycling.

### Actions

- Maintain the farm setting of Horseshoe Bend Farm to continue to provide the opportunity for families and community groups to experience interaction with farm animals. Periodically review operational management of the farm to assess visitor numbers, environmental capacity and operational costs.
- Investigate potential community or commercial opportunities to provide managed low-key farm activities and other passive recreational opportunities at Horseshoe Bends through an Expression of Interest process.
- The Expression of Interest will be assessed on the proposal’s capacity to meet the following requirements:-
  - The continuation and enhancement of an appropriate level of farm experiences for the visitor.
  - Continuing public access to the farm site.
  - The opportunity for involvement of community groups in site management activities.
  - A level of visitation and operating hours that can be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing access constraints.
  - The protection of environmental and cultural values and opportunities for interpretation.

- A long-term financially and environmentally sustainable outcome.
- Due regard to the capability of the site to support the proposed use.
- Ensure that any new recreational facilities or services complement the role of the management zone, facilitate enjoyment of the park environment and comply with park management objectives.
- Update interpretation of Horseshoe Bend and update the self-guided walk.
- Plant trees to provide shade for existing Park facilities including connections between visitor nodes.
- Maintain the existing picnic areas to ensure safe, quality facilities for large numbers of visitors.
- Determine an appropriate use for the former de-commissioned sewerage treatment plant area that would bring most benefit to the park through provision of recreation opportunities. Consider opportunities for hire for private functions.
- Investigate re-naming the picnic grounds, involving the community in the process.

### **5.5 Special Use Zone A (Park Management)**

#### **Purpose**

**An area designated to provide accommodation for Parks Victoria's administration of Brimbank Park, for regional Parks Victoria staff and for commercial services that complement park management objectives.**

#### **Description**

This Special Use Zone includes two park administration office areas. The existing regional office is located within a section of the landscape zone plateau immediately adjacent to the Keilor Terminal Station. It includes a number of buildings and associated car parking and hard standing areas. The site is accessed from Brimbank Road.

The depot area behind this office is currently commercially leased for activities that benefit the park. The leasee shares some facilities in the building with the park office.

The Brimbank Park office and Visitors Centre is located beside the recreation zone adjacent to the main visitor car park area within the Maribyrnong valley.

#### **Role**

- Provision of administration space for Parks Victoria regional and local requirements.
- Provision of space for commercially leased areas that benefit park management and provide financial and environmentally sustainable use of existing infrastructure.

#### **Actions**

- Investigate Parks Victoria's current administrative requirements.
- Ensure commercial lease arrangements comply with park management objectives.
- Ensure any alteration to use of the former depot and current office area does not adversely impact park values.
- Ensure any changes in future use provides for park related benefits.

### **5.6 Special Use Zone B (Utilities)**

#### **Purpose**

**Provision of excess capacity sewerage plant to service the adjacent suburbs.**

#### **Description**

The Keilor Sewerage Treatment Plant was developed to treat the sewerage of the developing adjacent suburbs in 1975 and decommissioned in 1998. Three quarters of the site (1.5ha) is being progressively rehabilitated for future park usage and is included in the Recreation Zone.

The remaining portion of the site (0.42ha) will retain existing power plants and associated works for utility purposes. These are adjacent to the Visitors Centre and share access from Car Park "A". City West Water currently leases this (0.42ha) Crown land, and will do so for the foreseeable future.

These facilities are fully fenced and landscaped to minimise intrusion into the park environment. There is no public access.

There are elements of sewerage infrastructure in the Parks Victoria managed area such as valve outlets that need to be considered when investigating future uses of the site.

#### **Role**

- To facilitate the provision and protection of water supply along the main Western Trunk (following the Maribymong River).

#### **Actions**

- Negotiate with the water utility company to reach agreement in respect to on-going and future requirements for the remaining infrastructure having regard to Park values.

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## 6 IMPLEMENTATION

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This Plan provides the framework for management of Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend over the next 10 to 15 years.

Implementation of the actions within this Future Directions Plan will be dependent on the requirements of increasing population and visitor demand, funding and agreements with other agencies.

### 6.1 Priorities and Staging

A number of key objectives need to be addressed if the vision for Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend is to be realised and the Park is to be recognised more widely as a valued community asset. These objectives are:

- Maintenance of quality visitor services and facilities to support recreational experiences.
- Provision of linkages between open spaces and the community.
- Promotion of the park values and opportunities to enhance community awareness and create a sense of ownership.
- Protection of landscape, cultural heritage and environmental values.
- Co-ordination of management of the Maribyrnong River between Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water.

The following actions are a priority, and envisioned to be a key focus within the next five years. However, the implementation of some of these priority actions will depend upon available funding and partnerships with other agencies and the community.

- Complete the Expression of Interest process to determine the future management of the farm setting and activities at Horseshoe Bend.
- Promote visitor appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the Park

through the provision of increased education and interpretation opportunities.

- Implement environmental programs focused on the protection and enhancement of habitats for known national, state and regionally threatened species, as well as JAMBA / CAMBA species.
- Implement a prioritised system of connecting strategic habitat gaps between existing patches of remnant vegetation.
- Manage coordinated pest plant and animal control programs and vegetation restoration strategies in conjunction with other agencies and adjoining landowners.
- Facilitate environmental programs through partnerships with tertiary institutions, Brimbank City Council and Friends groups.
- Manage leases and licences in a manner that protects park values and achieves appropriate returns.

Other actions within the Future Directions Plan will be undertaken incrementally, as the need arises and support and resourcing become available.

### 6.2 Management Resources

The current status of land ownership and management of Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend means that Parks Victoria is the sole agency responsible for all land based management. Liaison with Melbourne Water is imperative for co-ordinated management of the river. The extensive boundaries around the park are such that relationships with other agencies outside the Park are an important component of park management. The resourcing and implementation of some actions in this Plan will require collaborative partnerships with other management agencies, such as adjoining landowners, and community and user groups. Avenues of funding or assistance to achieve the actions within this plan may include:

- Individual management agency funding.
- State and Federal Landcare and Heritage grants.
- Environmental and community grant programs.
- Sport and Recreation Funding.
- Volunteer and community involvement such as Friends Groups, User Groups and Landcare.

### **6.3 Performance Measures**

There is some environmental, cultural heritage and recreation data available for Brimbank and Horseshoe Bend Park. This data will form the basis to create comparative measures. The following provide some criteria to measure performance by:-

- Implementation of priority actions in this Future Directions Plan.
- Community awareness of the Park
- Visitor satisfaction
- Environmental performance measures that monitor vegetation and habitat condition against conservation objectives.

### **6.4 Monitoring and Review**

Ongoing monitoring and review of this plan is required to ensure that strategic directions and actions remain relevant to meet the management objectives of the Park and maintain the recreational experiences of its visitors.

The implementation of these directions and actions will need to be assessed against available resourcing and work priorities.

The incremental changes at Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend over time will necessitate a review of this Future Directions Plan within 10 to 15 years.

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## 8 APPENDICES

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1. TABLE 1: - Management Zone Framework
2. FIGURE 1: - Locality Map
3. FIGURE 2: - Management Zones
4. FIGURE 3: - Links And Access

**TABLE 1**

**MANAGEMENT ZONE FRAMEWORK - INDICATIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**

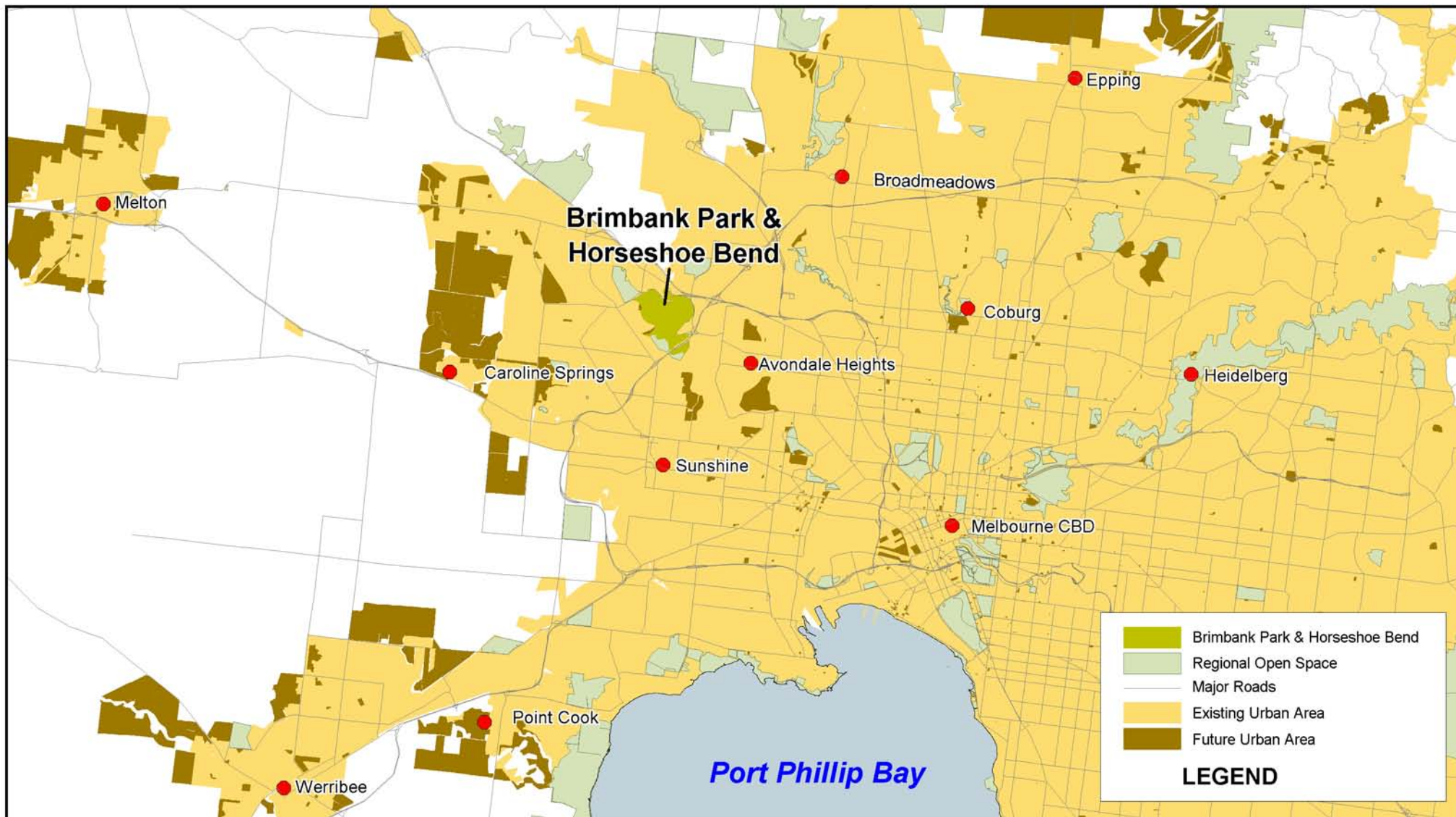
This Table provides an indicative list of the type of recreation activities that may be appropriate in Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend. In some areas the services and facilities to support such activities are not currently available. Activities will only be permitted after assessment against park management objectives.

This Table needs to be read in conjunction with the description, purpose and role of individual Management Zones. For the exact locations of current activities please refer to park signage, information brochures and staff.

**LEGEND**

- ✓ Activity allowed within management zone
- Activity possible but not provided for within management zone
- ✘ Activity prohibited
- ◆ Activity not possible within management zone
- ⊙ Activity permitted on designated trail only in Conservation Zone and prohibited in Kulin Wetlands and Horseshoe Bend.

ACTIVITY	Recreation					
	RECREATION	CONSERVATION & RECREATION	LANDSCAPE	CONSERVATION	SPECIAL USE ZONE A (Park Management)	SPECIAL USE ZONE B (Utilities)
	33.3 Hectares	21.6 Hectares	186 Hectares	115.5 Hectares	2.0 Hectares	2.5 Hectares
	9.3% of parkland	6.0% of parkland	51.2% of parkland	32.2% of parkland	0.6% of parkland	0.7% of parkland
Walking	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–
Dog Walking (on lead)	⊙	✓	✓	⊙	–	–
Jogging	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–
Bicycle riding	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–
Rollerblading	✓	✓	✓	✘	–	–
Skate boarding	✓	✓	✓	✘	–	–
Picnicking	✓	✓	✓	✘	✘	–
Barbecuing	✓	–	–	✘	✘	–
Playing (playground)	✓	–	–	✘	✘	–
Playing (ball games)	✓	✓	✓	✘	✘	–
Farm Activities	✓	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Fishing	◆	◆	◆	✓	◆	◆
Scenic Viewing	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–
Birdwatching	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–
Nature Study	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–
Heritage Study	✓	✓	✓	✓	--	–

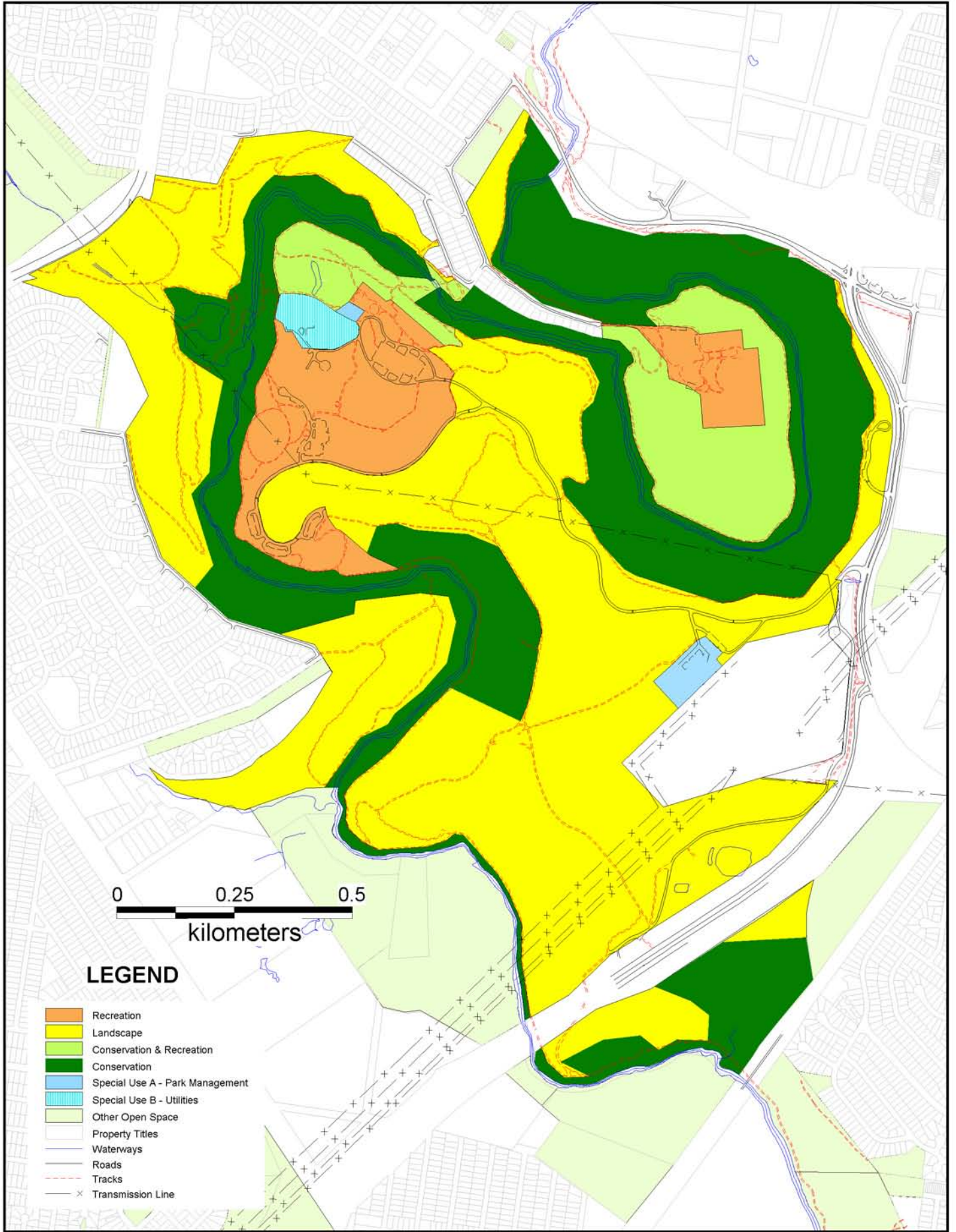


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 STATE DIGITAL MAPBASE USED WITH  
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 Department of Sustainability and Environment  
 MAP PRODUCED BY PARKS VICTORIA -  
 METROPOLITAN PARKS AND BAYS POLICY & STRATEGY

## Location Plan Brimbank Park and Horseshoe Bend Future Directions Plan



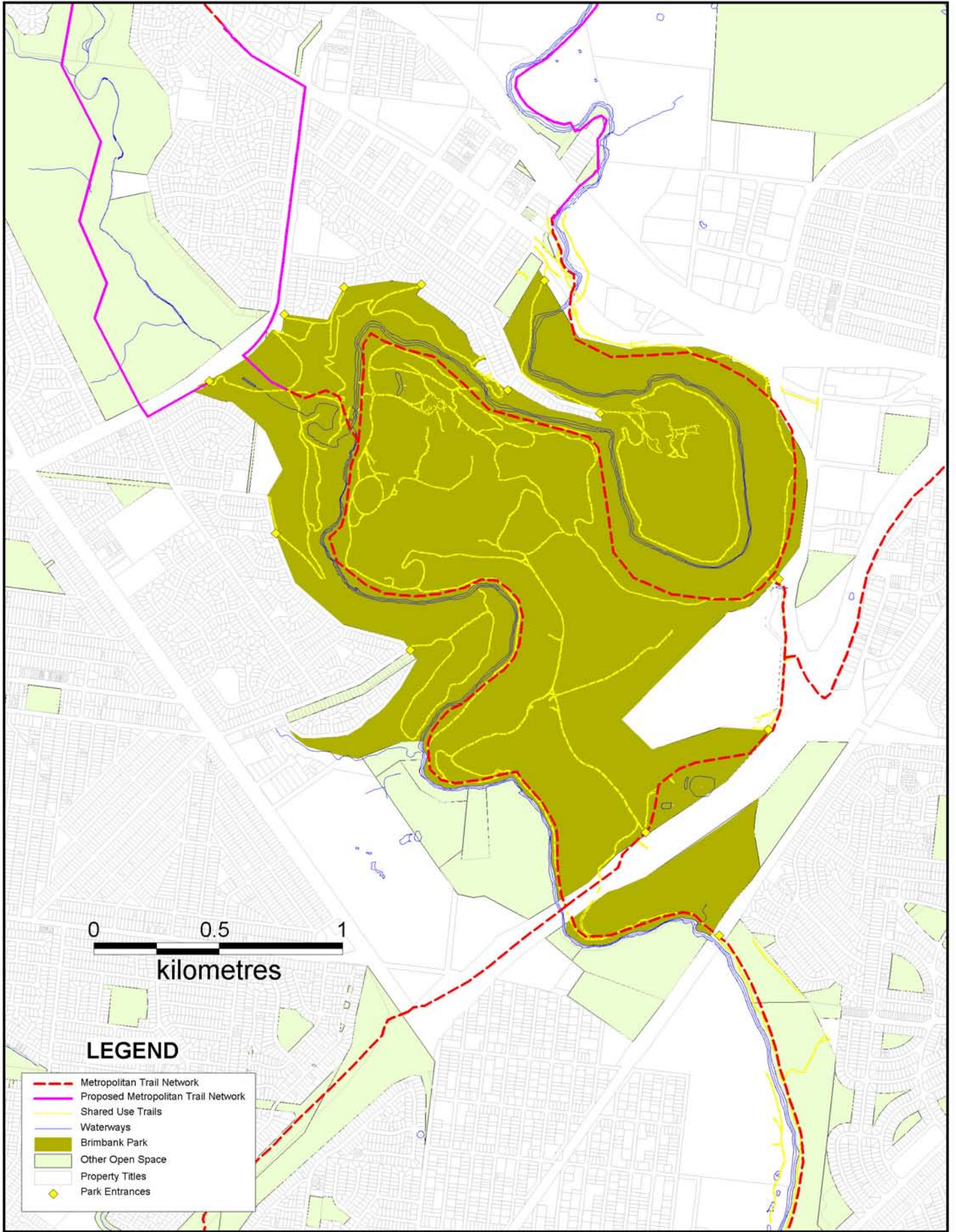
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## Management Zones Brimbank Park Future Directions Plan



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# Links & Access Brimbank Park Future Directions Plan

