

## Submission by Parks Victoria

### **Banyule Planning Scheme Amendment C107bany: Treetop Adventure Park, Yarra Flats Park, Ivanhoe East**

#### **Parks Victoria**

Parks Victoria was established in 1996, for the protection and enhancement of Victoria's parks and waterways, and is a statutory authority of the Victorian Government acting in accordance with the Parks Victoria Act 2018.

Under the Parks Victoria Act 2018, Parks Victoria's responsibilities are to provide services to the state and its agencies for the management of parks, reserves and other land under the control of the state, including waterways land (within the meaning of the Water Industry Act 1994), for the purposes of conservation, recreation, leisure, tourism or water transport. The minister responsible for administering the Parks Victoria Act is the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

Parks Victoria is responsible for managing a diverse estate of more than 4 million hectares including 3,000 land and marine parks and reserves making up 18 per cent of Victoria's landmass, 75 per cent of Victoria's wetlands and 70 per cent of Victoria's coastline. Victoria's parks are home to more than 4,300 native plant and around 1,000 native animal species.

Parks Victoria's estate attracts more than 100 million visits every year and we are committed to providing accessible, enjoyable, diverse programs and destinations while protecting and enhancing environmental and cultural values. It is our primary responsibility to ensure parks are healthy and resilient for current and future generations.

Parks Victoria works in partnership with other government and non-government organisations and community groups, catchment management authorities, private land owners, friends groups, volunteers, licensed tour operators, lessees, research institutes and the broader community.

Research suggests spending time in nature improves concentration, learning, problem solving, creativity and has physical and mental health benefits. Parks Victoria developed and named this approach Healthy Parks Healthy People which recognises the health of nature and the community is interlinked.

Parks Victoria's Healthy Parks Healthy People Framework guides how we maximise the benefits of parks for community health and wellbeing. The framework is driven by Victorian Government policy and outlines the critical role that Victoria's parks can play in encouraging healthier, more liveable, and more connected communities.

## **Planning Scheme Amendment C107 – Tree Adventure Park proposal in Yarra Flats Park**

In 2009 in response to the Victorian Government's Nature Based Tourism Strategy, Parks Victoria launched an Expression of Interest (EOI) process for the private sector to establish tree-based adventure facilities at five nominated sites which included both Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) managed locations.

Via the EOI Parks Victoria sought a partnership with a competent, experienced and suitably resourced operator to develop and operate the service via a lease agreement. Parks Victoria does not directly establish or operate such services.

Tree Based Facilities are considered a low impact, contemporary experience which can encourage participation, activity, understanding and advocacy of the park system from a range of users. They use low impact attachments which can be easily removed at the expiry of an agreement.

Tree Based Facilities have a defined course capacity and a high rate of pre booking, meaning that they are unlikely to significantly contribute to "over use" of the park on peak demand days.

In 2010, Ecoline Pty Ltd (Ecoline) was appointed as preferred proponent for the development of a Tree Based Adventure Facility (TBAF) at Yarra Flats in the Yarra Valley Parklands.

The Ecoline Tree Adventure is a specific component of the 2013 Yarra Flats Revised Concept Plan prepared jointly by Parks Victoria, Banyule Council and Melbourne Water, which included community consultation, including with the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners.

A Planning Scheme Amendment (C107) is required as the current zoning for Yarra Flats is Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ) only supports the proposed use as a tree adventure facility if it was developed and operated directly by Parks Victoria. It is to be developed and operated by an experienced and appropriately resourced operator rather than by Parks Victoria, under a lease agreement with Parks Victoria with appropriate conditions and terms.

The use is consistent with the zone (PCRZ), to "provide facilities which assist in public education and interpretation of the natural environment with minimal degradation of the natural environment or natural processes"

The proposed site is within an area of significantly modified vegetation that suffers from substantial weed proliferation. The remaining remnant vegetation is predominantly overstorey only and significant and sustained management intervention is required to remediate. The lease will include a program for weed removal and restoration.

Following the submission from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung on 26 February 2021, Ecoline has determined that a Cultural Heritage Management Plan will be pursued to support their proposal.

Parks Victoria supports Planning Scheme Amendment C107.

It is consistent with

- the Parks Victoria Act Statement of Obligations, made by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on 27 October 2018, that includes “*providing high quality opportunities for visitors to enjoy the parks and reserves, and contributing to the state’s visitor economy*”
- the Parks Victoria Strategic Plan Goal of “Connecting People and Nature”
- the Healthy Parks Healthy People Framework principles of
  - Contact with nature is essential for improving emotional, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing, and;
  - Parks are fundamental to economic growth and to vibrant and healthy communities
- Parks Victoria’s role in Healthy Parks Healthy People to
  - Ensure that the natural and cultural values of the parks estate are conserved and protected
  - Inspire the community to visit parks for emotional, physical, social, cultural and spiritual health and wellbeing benefits and to strengthen their relationship with nature and culture
  - Provide accessible, inclusive services and facilities that enable memorable experiences and positive health and wellbeing benefits
  - Collaborate and partner with Traditional Owners, government and non-government organisations, and the community to enable and encourage more people to connect with, and advocate for parks
- Protecting Victoria’s Environment – Biodiversity 2037
  - Consistent with the balanced objectives of this plan
- The Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy 2016, around attracting private sector investment to deliver better visitor experiences in parks
- The principles of the Yarra River Protection Act (2017)
  - It is highly consistent with principles pertaining to recreation, and not inconsistent with general and other principles.
- The Yarra River 50-year Community Vision for the Suburban Reach Section (as part of the Yarra Strategic Plan process) to “Collaborate to provide innovative immersive experiences with nature by expanding natural river tracks and creating environmental playgrounds along the corridor”
- The Draft Yarra Strategic Plan action to “Ensure park infrastructure and services are contemporary, inclusive, and provide multiple benefits”
- The purpose of the reservation of the park. Yarra Flats Park is within the Yarra Valley Parklands, a metropolitan park reserved under section 4 of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

- The Yarra Valley Parklands Management Plan 2008, specifically “Investigate innovative ways to improve the visitor experience at Yarra Flats by improving visibility and appropriate recreational activities to reflect the changed population dynamics of the adjacent activity centre at Heidelberg”
- The 2013 Revised Yarra Flats Concept Plan, which specifically includes the proposed Tree Adventure Facility.