

Chapter 9

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

It is now universally recognised that facilities for relaxation and exercise outdoors are an essential part of urban living, and that the provision of these facilities is a responsibility of civic administration. The love of the outdoors is an inherent characteristic of the Australian people. Whether it is by active participation in some sporting activity, or as spectators, or in motoring, walking, riding, cycling, swimming or working in their gardens, the people of Melbourne spend many of their leisure hours in the open air. The reservation of space sufficient to permit all sections of the community, whatever their age and inclination, to indulge in such healthy pastimes is therefore a very important function of a planning scheme. How important this is was revealed by the survey, which discloses that the equivalent of one person in every three over the age of 14 years either participates in or watches sport of some sort on Saturdays in the winter. One-third of these are active participants. In summer probably a greater number use the playing fields and the beaches. Just how many more younger children use playgrounds, how many adults and young people engage in walking, riding or cycling for pleasure, or merely stroll in public gardens for relaxation, is unknown, but undoubtedly the number is large.

With just over six acres for each 1,000 people in the metropolitan area, Melbourne is relatively well provided with public open space, but the detailed study of the needs disclosed that even this provision does not cater for the demand. At least 7½ acres, not including golf courses and racecourses, is desirable for every 1,000 people.

Most golf courses are owned by private clubs, and thus are not classed as public open space. It has been the experience in Melbourne, as elsewhere, that as the city grows around them, such clubs move to the outskirts of urban development, where land is less valuable, and into areas where the soil is most suitable. It seems certain that in future golf courses in Melbourne will be mostly located in the rural zone, and the scheme has provided for this. Melbourne already has three racecourses at Flemington, Moonee Valley and Caulfield, and land for a fourth is already bought at Sandown Park. Of these, only Moonee Valley is unfavourably located from the planning viewpoint, and that club has secured land for its future needs at Somer-

ton, in the rural zone. These four courses are sufficient to satisfy the future needs.

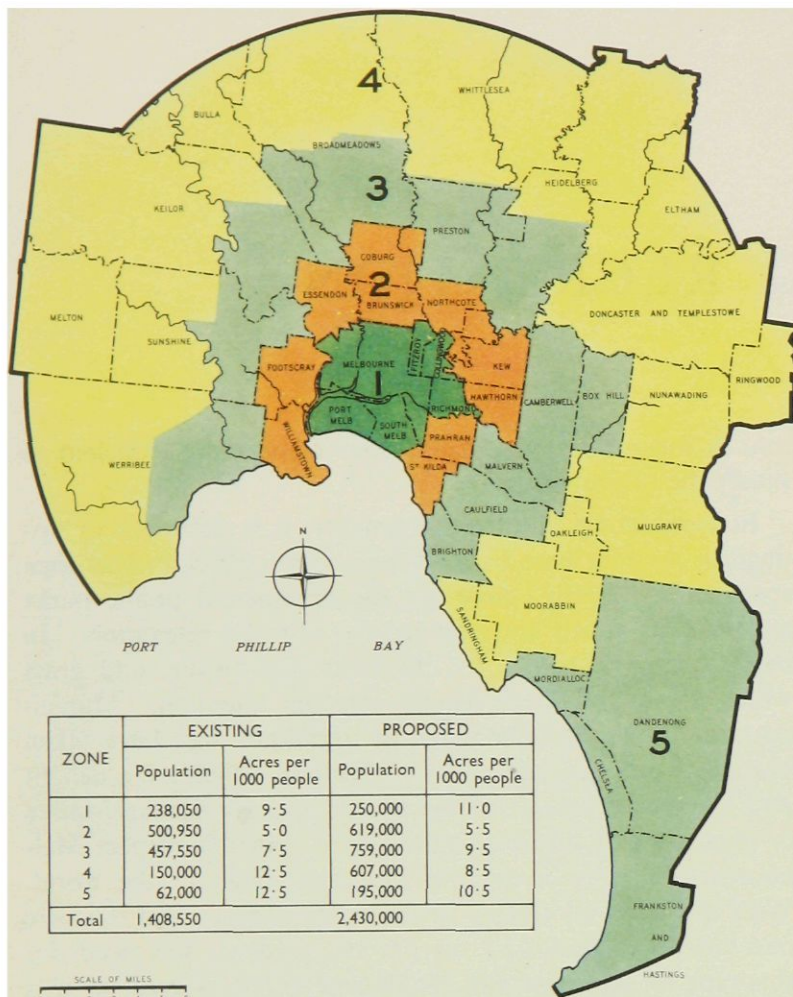
In considering future requirements, it is desirable to distinguish the four broad classifications into which public open space falls. Firstly, there are the ornamental public parks and gardens which are intended for rest and relaxation. In these upkeep is heavy, for the trees and flowers and grass which distinguish them require constant attention. Municipal authorities throughout the metropolitan area have taken particular pride in their parks of this type, which are a delight and a splendid service to the people and a continual source of pleasure and surprise to the visitor. In this respect Melbourne compares favourably with most cities of the world. With the large allotments in the outer suburbs and the care and attention bestowed on private gardens, the need for this type of open space in Melbourne is not as great as it is in many other cities. The greatest need appears to be to establish rest parks in conjunction with busy shopping centres where the shopper may have the opportunity of brief relaxation from the bustle of shopping activity. Nowhere is this more needed than in the central business area where, within its 320 acres, there are no such public amenities. In contrast, Macquarie Place and Wynyard Square in Sydney are a boon to the city worker there.

Next are those areas of open space used mainly for sporting purposes, but in which space not so used is usually devoted to trees and grass to provide a park-like atmosphere. Upkeep in these cases is not so heavy as in the purely ornamental gardens. It is this type of area in which there is the greatest deficiency and for which the greatest provisions must be made in future.

Other open spaces are left substantially in their natural state, and upkeep is relatively light. These provide facilities for walking, riding, cycling and picnicing and serve a function intermediate between the rest park and the sports ground.

Finally, there are children's playgrounds small in size, but particularly necessary in congested areas, and closely related to the primary school.

All these four categories are found, either separately or in conjunction throughout the suburbs of Melbourne, but unfortunately they are not properly distributed among the people who use them. This is clearly shown in map 19, in which



19 DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN SPACE

the urban area has been divided into approximately concentric rings mostly defined by municipal boundaries. The present deficiency in the intermediate suburbs is especially noticeable, but in these districts the provision of more space at reasonable cost is extremely difficult. As time goes on, however, some additional areas will become available as quarries cease production and are reclaimed.

The early planners showed wisdom in providing an almost continuous ring of public open space around the city, but this commendable foresight had repercussions which they could not have foreseen. The open space they provided was so generous, that, as the population extended beyond these parks, it was not considered essential to reserve more parkland.

Therefore, despite the best endeavours of municipal councils in later years, the amount of open space within the intermediate suburbs is sadly deficient. In consequence, the inner major parks are used very intensively, typical being Princes Park, where, in an area of 56 acres, are squeezed playing areas which properly would require 100 acres.

In the outer municipalities, councils generally have been seized with the importance of this aspect of community life and have, within the extent of their resources, tried to keep pace with the growing population. Indicative of the need

of the inner areas, the outer suburbs receive many requests for sporting accommodation from clubs closer in.

In addition to the parks, gardens and playing fields, Melbourne has, within the planning boundaries, 47 miles of bay foreshore, most of which has already been reserved for public use. Along this foreshore are 35 miles of beaches, most of which are to be found in the southern bayside suburbs. To some extent they reduce the need for parks in those areas. Although the foreshore parks have been included in figures quoted here, the areas of the various beaches have not.

The survey indicated that for Melbourne conditions the needs of the future should be based broadly on the following standards:

Ornamental and rest parks	2 acres per 1,000 people
Sports grounds (excluding golf and racing)	4 acres per 1,000 people
Children's playgrounds	1½ acres per 1,000 people

The provision of children's playgrounds is a matter for local planning and no additional specific areas have been reserved for this purpose in the planning scheme. The selection and acquisition of such areas is the province of the local municipal councils, is within their financial resources, and can safely be left in their hands.

To avoid unnecessary acquisitions and to secure the fullest use of land, school grounds should be planned so that wherever possible the playing areas can be used as children's playgrounds when not required for school purposes. This should not be difficult on new school sites, and would justify the co-operation of the Education Department and the local council in their improvement.

In providing in the planning scheme for other requirements for open space, metropolitan rather than local needs have been the guiding factor, and although small areas have been reserved when they appear particularly suitable, the decision as to what smaller parks and gardens are necessary has also been left substantially to individual councils.

The new areas provided are shown in map 20, and with those already existing, form a major metropolitan park system, providing for:

- Better distribution of public open space throughout the urban area as shown in map 19.
- A series of large peripheral parks, which can be developed, as the need arises, into playing and recreational areas similar to Albert Park. In many instances the opportunity exists for creating artificial lakes which would add to their attractiveness. It is considered particularly necessary that in the west and north-west, where more people are needed, the desirability of the residential districts should be enhanced by creating attractive park and recreational areas.
- A series of radial parks, mostly along the valleys of the River Yarra and the various creeks and watercourses, joining the larger park areas and thus affording the opportunity not only for field sports, but also a place