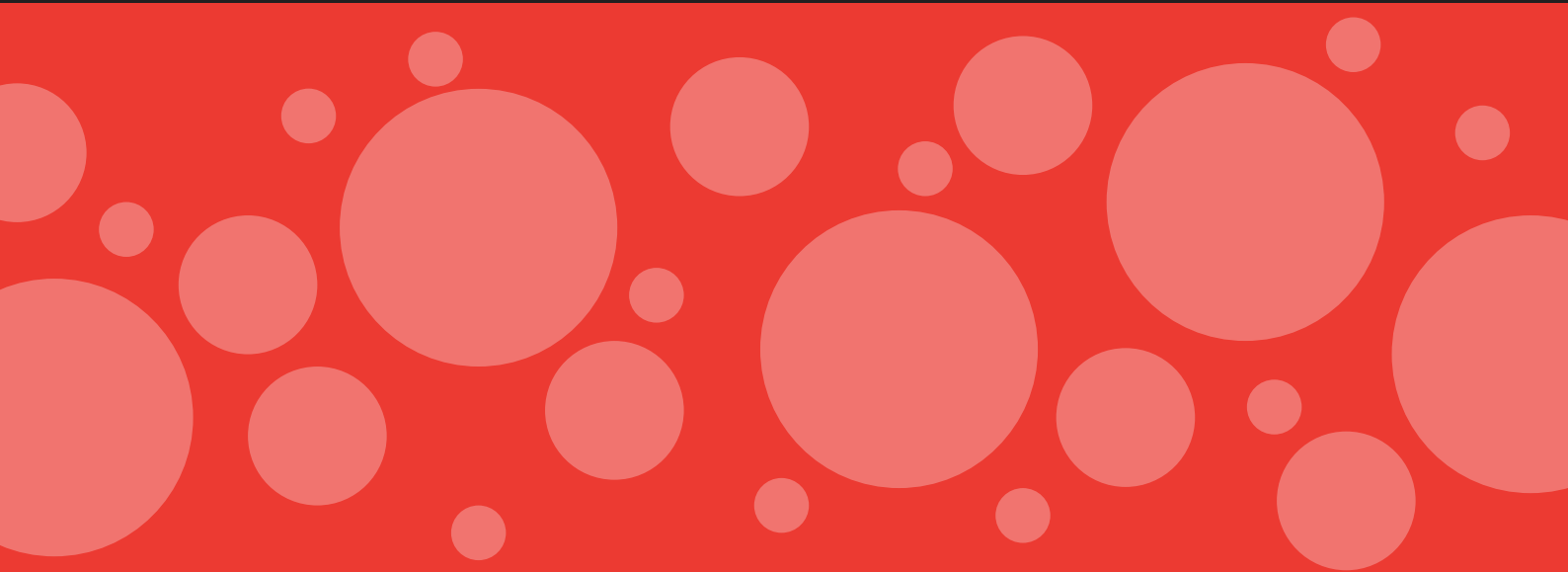


Commonwealth Park Concept Vision 2025



START OF A CONVERSATION

NATIONAL TRIANGLE, CANBERRA

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of Canberra; we pay respects to their Elders, past and present; and recognise their long-standing connection to the lands of the ACT.

We also recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

Introduction

Original masterplan drawings and model of 'Commonwealth Gardens' by Sylvia Crowe and Associates, William Holford and Partners, 1964

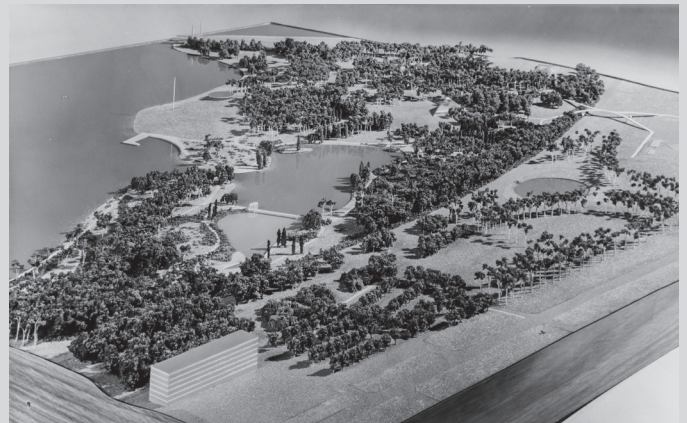
In the early 1960s Commonwealth Park was designed as a new public park for the people of the growing capital. It would be developed on the soon-to-be-filled lake. In 1963 the park was officially named and gazetted by Federal Parliament.

Initially called Commonwealth Gardens, the change in name to Commonwealth Park led to a more active and participatory public place, rather than a passive garden.

The Park is located on the north shore of Lake Burley Griffin and has been host to a wide range of recreational activities that form an important part of 'public Canberra'. Events such as Floriade, Skyfire, music festivals and community functions all call the park home, as well as flora and fauna, such as the Grey-headed Flying-fox.

The park has been a wonderful asset for Canberra and the Capital over the past 60 years. The National Capital Authority (NCA) is looking forward to another 60 years of concepts and ideas that consider how the park can adapt to suit the community's changing needs in public space and to ensure future generations of visitors continue to use, and more importantly, value the park.

This concept vision was prepared by Turf Design Studio at the request of the National Capital Authority.



Children's Shore in Commonwealth Park completed in the late 1960s

Background

This project was initiated by the NCA to review Commonwealth Park, its functions and design and its place in Canberra and the Capital. Last year marked the 60th anniversary of the filling of Lake Burley Griffin and the Nerang Pool, and 2023 marked the official gazetting and naming of Commonwealth Park.

Original design

The site of Commonwealth Park was marked as public space in the earliest city plans by Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin. In the 1950s, Canberra was still a small town with few significant public spaces or parks. English architect William Holford and compatriot landscape architect Sylvia Crowe developed a park masterplan that was adopted and constructed as part of the creation of the new lake — developing the original ‘water axis’ concept.

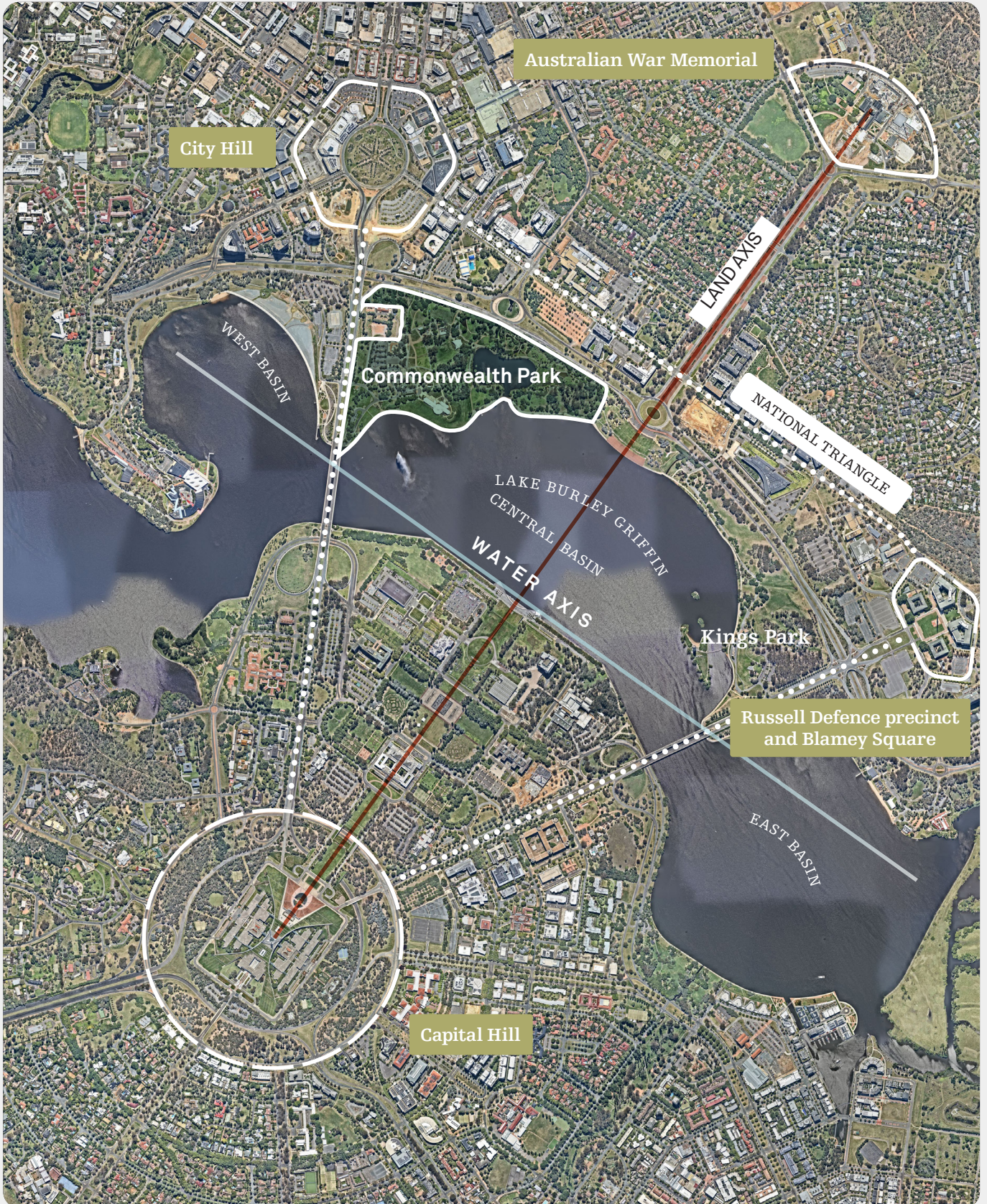
The original masterplan of the park has served Canberra since it first opened in 1964 on the newly filled Lake Burley Griffin. Since then the population of Canberra has grown sixfold from 76,000 people in 1964 to close to half a million in 2024.

Better utilisation of some parts of the park, along with an overall elevation of the park as an important social, cultural and environmental place are key drivers in establishing a new concept vision. The park sits within a wider network of parklands that surround the lake and it is also the closest major park to the Central Buisness District. It has a special place in the life of Canberra, part designed garden, part park, part play space, part cycle and running track and part community event and entertainment venue.



Commonwealth Park Context

Aerial photograph showing location of the park within the National Triangle



Park timeline

Commonwealth Park was envisaged as a waterfront recreation space from the earliest concept designs for Canberra by the Griffins. It opened around 50 years after the first city plans were made, when the Molonglo River was dammed to create a new lake in 1964. Ever since, the park has been an important place of ceremony, presentation, community events and recreation.



1820s
Area first visited and surveyed by British explorers

1845
St John's Anglican Church, the oldest surviving public building in the inner city, consecrated



1868
Blundells Cottage built east of the site (now Kings Park)

1874
One room house built which later became Murray's Bakery and Store (east of Nerang Pool)

1788

1840

1850

1860

1870

1880

1890



1955
Canberra Olympic Pool opens

1957
Canadian flagpole installed

Canadian Gift Flagpole For Canberra
The tallest flagpole in Australia reached Canberra yesterday morning straddled across the length of three railway trucks. It is a gift to the nation from the Canadian Government and bears out a promise made by the Canadian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. C. D. Howe, on a visit here earlier this year.



1960

1959
Lake Burley Griffin construction starts



1970

1980



1960
Sylvia Crowe selected to design new park

1990

1954
Queen Elizabeth II first visit to Canberra 14—18 February

1955
Canberra Olympic Pool opens on 22 December

1955
Canadian Flagpole gifted and Regatta Point selected as the site

1956
Melbourne Olympics

1956
National Capital Development Commission established to oversee an expansive phase of planning, construction and development of Canberra

1957
Canadian Flagpole officially handed over at Regatta Point on 20 November

1961
Final NCDC recommendations for park design

1962–1963
Kings Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue Bridges built over river

1963
Queen Elizabeth II visits park on 11 March and Exhibition Kiosk opened

1963
Park name officially gazetted on 21 November

1964
Lake filled by April and inaugurated by Prime Minister Robert Menzies on 17 October

1964
Parkes Way (east) constructed dividing the city from the lake and parklands

1964
Oak tree grown from an acorn from Royal Park, Richmond, UK planted by HRH Duchess of Kent, 28 September

1965
Architect William Holford and Partners and Sylvia Crowe and Associates complete final landscape report in January

1966
Lady Bird Johnson planted Arizona Cypress at Regatta Point on 21 October

1967
Amphitheatre and Stream Valley built

1969
'Mulwala House' demolished 20 years after opening

1970
National Carillon opened on April 26 by Queen Elizabeth II and Australian National Botanic Gardens open

1972
Memorial for Pioneer Women opened

1974
First Australia Day events

1975
Australia '75 outdoor sculpture event in the park

1975—1986
Sunday in the Park events

1976
Mirror Pool built

1977
Sylvia Crowe visits to review and direct revised master plan

1979 Parkes Way footbridge and stone fort on Children's Shore built

1980
Japan Prime Minister gifts 200 cherry trees to the Park

1982
Outdoor chess, toilets, lighting and parking added

1988
Bicentenary of Australia Stage 88 opened by Bob Hawke on 12 March

1988
New Australian Parliament House opens

1988
Floriade established

1988
ACT self government enacted

1989
Canberra National Convention Centre opens

1989 NCDC wound up and the National Capital Authority was established



'Mr Dunk said he was anxious to see a central park area developed in Canberra. He had in mind formal gardens, a band rotunda, kiosk, etc. He thought the scheme would envisage facilities for children such as wading pool, sandpits, and wallaby park.'

— 1 MARCH 1949



1901
Federation of Australia
1 January

1900

1911
Land transferred to the Federal Government from NSW and a design competition for the capital established

1912
March 12 Canberra named

1913
International Competition for Canberra won by Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin

1913—1920
800,000 trees planted around Canberra by Charles Weston including western side of the new Commonwealth Park

1910

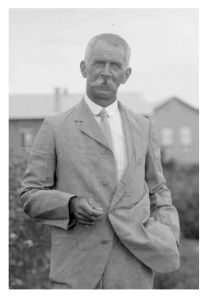
1922
Catholic Cathedral site selected on eastern side of Commonwealth Avenue in the north west of the park

1923
Murray's Bakery and Store destroyed by fire

1927
First Federal Parliament opened in Canberra



1920



Charles Weston

1931
Presbytery built on Catholic Cathedral site designed by John Moore (competition winning-scheme)

1930s
Area used as an informal parkland

1939
World War II begins

1930

1945
World War II ends

1947
'Mulawa House' built on north west of site for new city workers

1949
Robert Menzies begins a record breaking run as Prime Minister (1949—1967)

1949
Early calls for a central city park by Lindsay Pryor and Sir William Dunk

1940

1954
First visit to Australia and Canberra by Queen Elizabeth II



Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh arrive at Australian War Memorial, 16 February 1954
NSWSL Q394.4/E

1950



1964
Lake filled and officially opened



2000

2000
National Capital Exhibition Centre opened on 2 November

2001
Centenary of Federation

2003
Competition for National Arboretum

2006
RG Menzies Walk around lake completed

2009
Citizenship Place opened on 26 January

1966
US First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson plants Arizona Cypress tree



2010

2013
National Arboretum opened

2018
Henry Rolland Park opened west of Commonwealth Park

2019
Canberra Light Rail Stage 1 opened

2020

2022
Regatta Point building expanded

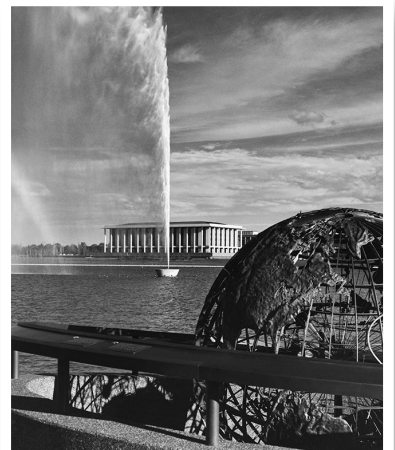
2022
West Basin foreshore constructed

2023
60th anniversary of gazetting of park name

2024
Barbara Hepworth sculpture 'Two Figures' relocated

1970
Captain Cook Memorial opened

1970
Bicentennial of Captain Cook's voyage and mapping of east coast of Australia marked with fountain and globe inaugurated by Queen Elizabeth II on 25 April



2010s
Music festivals





Changes over time

Since the first plans of Canberra were developed, the site of Commonwealth Park was reserved for future use as a series of public spaces and gardens. Early tree planting and a lookout were established at Regatta Point where visitors and residents could gain a view of the National Triangle to the south and the emerging city to the north. Since the filling of Lake Burley Griffin in 1964, the park has evolved, adapting and changing with an array of significant plantings, sculptures and monuments added to the landscape.

KEY EVENTS

- 1960s ORIGINAL MASTER PLAN AND DESIGN
- 1963 EXHIBITION KIOSK OPENED
- 1964 FILLING OF LAKE, PONDS AND POOLS
- 1967 PARK DEPOT BUILT
- 1970 CAPTAIN COOK MEMORIAL AND JET INSTALLED
- 1970s MAJOR SCULPTURE EVENTS AND FESTIVALS
- 1979 PLAY ADDITIONS FOR 'YEAR OF THE CHILD'
- 1988 BICENTENNIAL EVENTS, STAGE 88 & FLORIADE
- 2000 NATIONAL CAPITAL EXHIBITION OPENED
- 2006 OPENING OF RG MENZIES LAKESIDE WALK
- 2021 EXTENSION TO REGATTA POINT BUILDING



33
HECTARES

• Canberra Olympic Pool 1955

• Coranderrk Pond 1963

• Mirror Pool 1976
* 'Kangaroos' 1981

* 'Earthwork' buried 1975

• Marsh Gardens 1964

* 'Seated Lady' 1977

* 'Untitled (Steel Birds)' 1991

Parkes Way Stage II April 1963

• Stone Fort 1979

• Children's Shore 1964

* Underpass 1963

* Play Sculpture 1970

* Amphitheatre 1967

* 'Two Figures' 1976—2023

• Nerang Pool 1964

• Pool 1964

• Lily Pond 1964

• Chessboard 1982

• TOILETS

• Stream Valley 1967

2023
ypress 1966

▲ Murray's Bakery 1860—1923 (PLAQUE 2011)

▲ Pioneer Womens Memorial 1972

• Commemorative Oak 1964

▲ Citizenship Place 2009

▲ Stanley Bruce Memorial

▲ Sybil Irving Memorial 1979

022

* Menzies Sculpture 2006

• Ferry Wharf

• Spectator Shore 1964

• RG Menzies Walk 2006

Gallipoli Reach 1985 •

• Lake Burley Griffin 17 October 1964

Rond Terrace •



1964

LEGEND



Significant planting



Building, venue or place



Memorial



Sculpture/artwork



Removed/moved object

Role of Commonwealth Park

Open space on the lake

Commonwealth Park forms a key part of the sequence of parks and public spaces that surround Lake Burley Griffin. The park covers an area of around 33 hectares of dedicated public space that includes a range of access, recreation, event and relaxation purposes. It is a place to escape to and enjoy a landscape where water is an important thematic and physical component. The park is a gateway to the lake walking loop. Changing demographics, recreation needs and increased density in nearby precincts including Acton, Reid and the CBD are driving demand for local active and passive open spaces.

A ceremonial and civic place

Over the past 60 years the park has been the location and repository for ceremonies, presentations and events. These events and activities have included commemorative tree plantings by international visitors, a flag pole gifted by Canada (since removed), sculptures, memorials, the Captain Cook Globe, Australia Day events and fireworks shows. Sculptures and public art have also become a key element in the landscape setting.

Gardens and horticulture

One of the early ambitions for the park was that it be a place of 'Australian horticultural excellence', through garden design, specimen planting, a display of bonsai trees and a proposed conservatory. The addition of the annual Floriade event in 1988 established the park as the home to the largest spring flower show in Australia. Over 350 species of introduced and endemic species can be found in the park. Seasonality is a strong thematic element of the park. The opening of the Australian National Botanic Gardens in 1970 and National Arboretum in 2013 shifted aspects of the horticultural focus and role of the park more to public recreation and events.



Events, exhibitions and entertainment

Since opening, the park has been a focal point for community events, sculpture shows and festivals. The National Capital Exhibition at Regatta Point has promoted the park as a place for education and exhibition, and a place to learn about the history and future of Canberra as the nation's capital. The addition of the outdoor concert Stage 88 and Floriade in 1988 reinforced and expanded the large-scale-public event role of the park, providing a unique setting for gatherings.

Connection to water

Water and aquatic experience is a key attribute of the park, connecting visitors to the cooling and calming character of the lake, pools, ponds and a constructed creek known as 'Stream Valley'. The Grey-headed Flying-fox colony is located in the park because of the proximity to water.

A focus on innovative play

The original 1960s design of the park by landscape architect Sylvia Crowe established a robust, progressive and interesting park environment for children that moved away from typical park and playground design of the time. It was one of the first parks to promote 'nature play' — years ahead of playground design trends. Later additions for the 1979 *International Year of the Child* supported by activity programs further established the park as a destination for kids, parents and carers.



City Parks in Australia

City parks are designed for a wide range of activities, and often for events and uses that are difficult to accommodate in other parts of the city. Commonwealth Park is of a scale similar to other important public parks around Australia and provides a similar role in the urban life of the city.

Commonwealth Park at 33-hectares in size was conceived as a great urban park for a new city and today it plays a similar role in Canberra as other landmark inner city parks — part garden, part landscape, part event space, all within convenient walking distance of the activities of a central business and activity district.



16 hectare/ Hyde Park, Sydney
The oldest public park in Australia, located in the heart of the Sydney CBD, with an iconic design and arrangement of paths, monuments, gardens, fountains and a significant War Memorial terminating the primary axis.



30 hectare/ Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney
Harbourside gardens, focused on horticultural display, science and social gatherings. The garden is defined by a constructed foreshore sea wall and rolling hilly topography.



50 hectare/ Adelaide Botanic Gardens
Established in 1857, it retains its Victorian era landscape garden with lawns, avenues, arbors, kiosks and ponds on North Terrace only a short walk from Adelaide's CBD. The garden has a strong horticultural and scientific focus.



26 hectare/ Carlton Gardens, Melbourne
Victorian-era gardens and lawns, with public buildings including the Exhibition Building and Melbourne Museum. The park is a significant public thoroughfare that connects Carlton and the inner-north to the city.



42 hectare/ Sydney Park, St Peters, Sydney
 Reclaimed hard rubbish-dump now located in a high density residential area, with significant urban public domain alongside environmental measures, lawns, landforms, playgrounds and retained heritage.



34 hectare/ Domain, Sydney
 A large open parkland space primarily used for major events, outdoor concerts, festivals, sport, protest rallies and other large public gatherings. Peak use occurs during the warmer summer months.



44 hectare/ Darling Harbour, Tumbalong, Sydney
 Destinalional public spaces with playgrounds, large event spaces, lawns, hospitality, conference facilities, exhibition, performance venues and retail. The public domain is supported by an annual events calendar.



11 hectare/ Roma Street Gardens, Brisbane
 A contemporary inner-city parkland built adjacent to the CBD, opened in 2000. The park includes ponds, waterfalls, rainforest walkway, floral display gardens, play spaces, lawns, an amphitheatre and an outdoor cinema.

Issues

PARK EXPERIENCE

Lacking amenity

There is a perception that parts of the park are under used and lack visitor amenity in line with contemporary needs of residents, visitors and other stakeholders.

Competing uses

Although contained to the western precinct, major events affect the wider use and enjoyment of a large area of the park, closed off by temporary fences and set up/pack down.

Legibility and purpose

The park has many uses, user groups, operators and stakeholders. Establishing an appropriate balance between these groups whilst providing a set of principles that set out the purpose of the park and its future role is required to improve governance.

ACCESSIBILITY

Poor connection to city and adjacent precincts

Existing links, paths and transport to the city and surrounding areas are not optimum. The footbridge over Parkes Way is narrow and non compliant with steep grades and is no longer suitable for the scale of events and activities in the park.

Equitable access

The park does not meet a high level of accessibility consistent with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) standards including access paths, ramps, furniture and toilets. Access routes are often affected by construction work and the installation of Floriade and other events.

Wayfinding and identity

Clear signage, wayfinding and park information are not provided or is hard to locate. Pedestrian and cycle routes and key destinations are not well defined or presented.

MAINTENANCE

High intensity uses and tired open space, in parts

The heavy demands of intense major events such as Floriade, music festivals and community events disrupt the park, but also provide activity, investment and an audience for the park. These events have an impact on presentation and state of the park.

Maintenance and public domain condition

Paths, playgrounds, lawns, gardens, waterways and trees require increased investment, maintenance and care under a long-term masterplan.

Park depot location

The existing park depot is located in the middle of the western precinct and does not provide an optimum setting or presentation to the park environment, and uses prime space for vehicle storage and utility purposes.

Eastern pedestrian tunnel under Parkes Way



Drained Mirror Pool



Low amenity public toilets



Narrow footbridge to City over Parkes Way



Overgrown and under maintained in areas



Park depot in central park area

DESIGN

Legacy of original design

The design of the park was a landmark in Australian landscape architecture. Maintaining, honouring and enhancing the original design is important.

Innovate and improve the design quality of the park

Commonwealth Park should be an exemplar park for design, environment, landscape and architecture, that sets a high benchmark for innovation, quality and amenity.

Evolution and new additions

Modifying, adapting and planning for new experiences, additions, spaces and architecture has been difficult to deliver.

FACILITIES

Outdoor stage, green rooms and technical set up

The capacity and technical constraints of event facilities, such as the outdoor stage and amphitheatre, could be addressed with long-term solutions that serve a variety of scales of events that would increase bookings, use and flexibility for different types of performances and activities.

Toilets, seating, picnic shelters and barbecues

Contemporary parks with a high number of daily visitors require a greater number and better quality public facilities distributed across the park including toilets, dining options, seating, shade and shelter.

Play spaces lacking

Once the pre-eminent park and play space in Canberra, over time the play offering has diminished, with few evolutions or additions that encourage longer stays and are inclusive for all ages and abilities.

ENVIRONMENT

Grey-headed Flying-fox colony

The Flying-fox population in the park is a consideration particularly in regard to noise generating events and the ongoing impact on existing trees and gardens in the park.

Nerang Pool, Lily Pond and Childrens Pool

The three-hectare system of shallow pools and pond systems in the park have an important role in the overland flow and drainage of the areas to the north of the park. Parts of the waterways are silted up, overgrown and affected by weeds. The Lily Pond has recently been cleared and revitalised back to its original state.

Trees and gardens

Aging trees and gardens in various states of condition require review and a strategic approach to new plantings to improve longevity and succession. A low level of maintenance and investment in gardens and tree plantings outside of Floriade has had an impact on the overall state and amenity of the park.

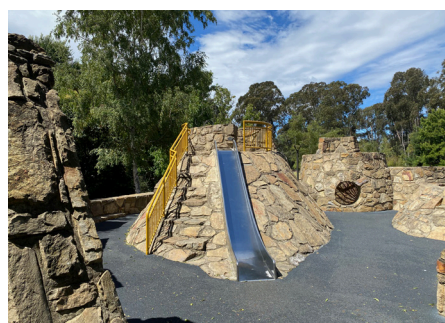
Children's Amphitheatre



Annual disruption of Floriade construction



Overgrown and silted up Lily Pond - recently addressed



Stone Fort



Floriade truck movements



Silted up Marsh Gardens - recently addressed

Concept Vision

A park for Canberra and the nation

Celebrate the park's place in the National Triangle

Commonwealth Park is an important public space in the northern part of the National Triangle. It is part of the suite of significant national cultural sites and has an ongoing role supporting national, city and local identity.

Better connected

The location of Commonwealth Park between Lake Burley Griffin, Commonwealth Avenue and Parkes Way has meant that the park has felt somewhat disconnected from adjacent areas including the Canberra CBD and suburbs of Acton and Reid. The park needs general improvements to connectivity for walking, cycling and public transport. Arrival points need to be improved at key thresholds to celebrate the park and provide a better visitor experience.

Enhanced heritage values

The core values of the park and its layered history of the park design are to be considered before undertaking future works, to ensure its significant landscape and design values are retained and improved.

New Gardens

Create a new lakeside garden room with endemic plantings and space to represent First Nations culture and connection to Country.

Improved home for Floriade

An improved home for Floriade will provide year-round floral displays that celebrate the strong seasonality of Canberra. Permanent beds will reduce the need for temporary works and subsequent impacts on the Park.

Improved outdoor entertainment

The park will continue to be an important destination for outdoor entertainment. Upgrades to Stage 88 and an expanded lawn amphitheatre will allow for a broader range of events and increased capacity.

Broader exhibition, events and cultural offerings

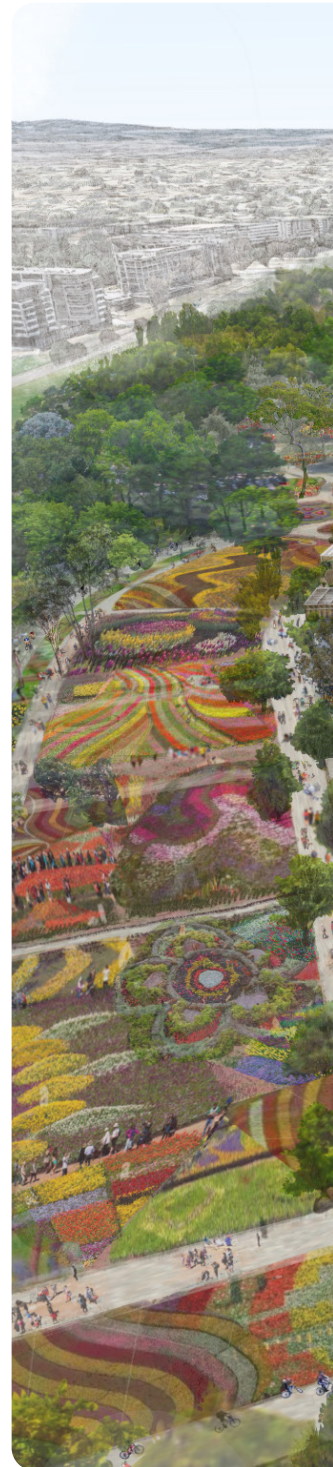
A series of new pavilions and facilities to support a broader range of exhibitions, events, displays and cultural offerings.

Enhance tourism and education

Access and public domain upgrades to Regatta Point will improve visitor experience, and celebrate the Park as a premier destination for tourism, education and exhibition.

Opportunity for a new aquatic centre within the park

A new swimming and recreation venue will be sensitively integrated into the park, responding to the park and lake setting. The addition of a pool aligns with the original vision for a pool to be located within a civic park, and supports the recreational role of the park and lakeside aquatic activities.





Artist Impression

Image credit: Mark Gerada

New footbridge
Replace existing Allara Street pedestrian bridge with a wider and more accessible route that better links the city and park. SEE PAGE 42

New park depot

Relocated maintenance depot to create more space for events.

Future Floriade

Rationalised and concentrated event precinct with permanent infrastructure to reduce bump in and bump out impacts. SEE PAGE 38

Future Aquatic Centre

Potential location for a new aquatic and recreation centre on existing car park, well connected to public transport. SEE PAGE 44

TOILET BLOCK

Light rail station

A new Commonwealth Park stop proposed as part of the Stage 2 extension from the city will provide improved public transport access.

New landscape, gardens and gathering space

A new landscape, gardens and gathering place as a new garden room within the park that revitalises the south western corner with endemic plantings. SEE PAGE 46

Regatta Point

Maintained as the key visitor exhibition, cafe and restaurant venue for Commonwealth Park, with improved connections to lake foreshore path and city. SEE PAGE 26

New outdoor entertainment venues

Upgraded amphitheatre lawns, new stage, technology and green room with new permanent supporting areas for public amenities, exhibitions and events. SEE PAGE 36

Marsh Gardens

Renew and upgrade original marsh gardens including water systems planting and paths.

SEE PAGE 52

Sylvia Crowe Play Precinct

Major upgrade and design improvements to the play scape with focus on wild play and the natural environment. Activities supported by better amenities, new toilets, cafe/kiosk, seating, barbecues and picnic shelters.

SEE PAGE 55

Wetland play

Investigate new uses of the Lily Pond as part of the water play experience on the eastern edge of the park. SEE PAGE 56

Nerang Pool

Restoration of pool and investigation of a new central island with connecting paths. Support leisure and boating activities on the pool.

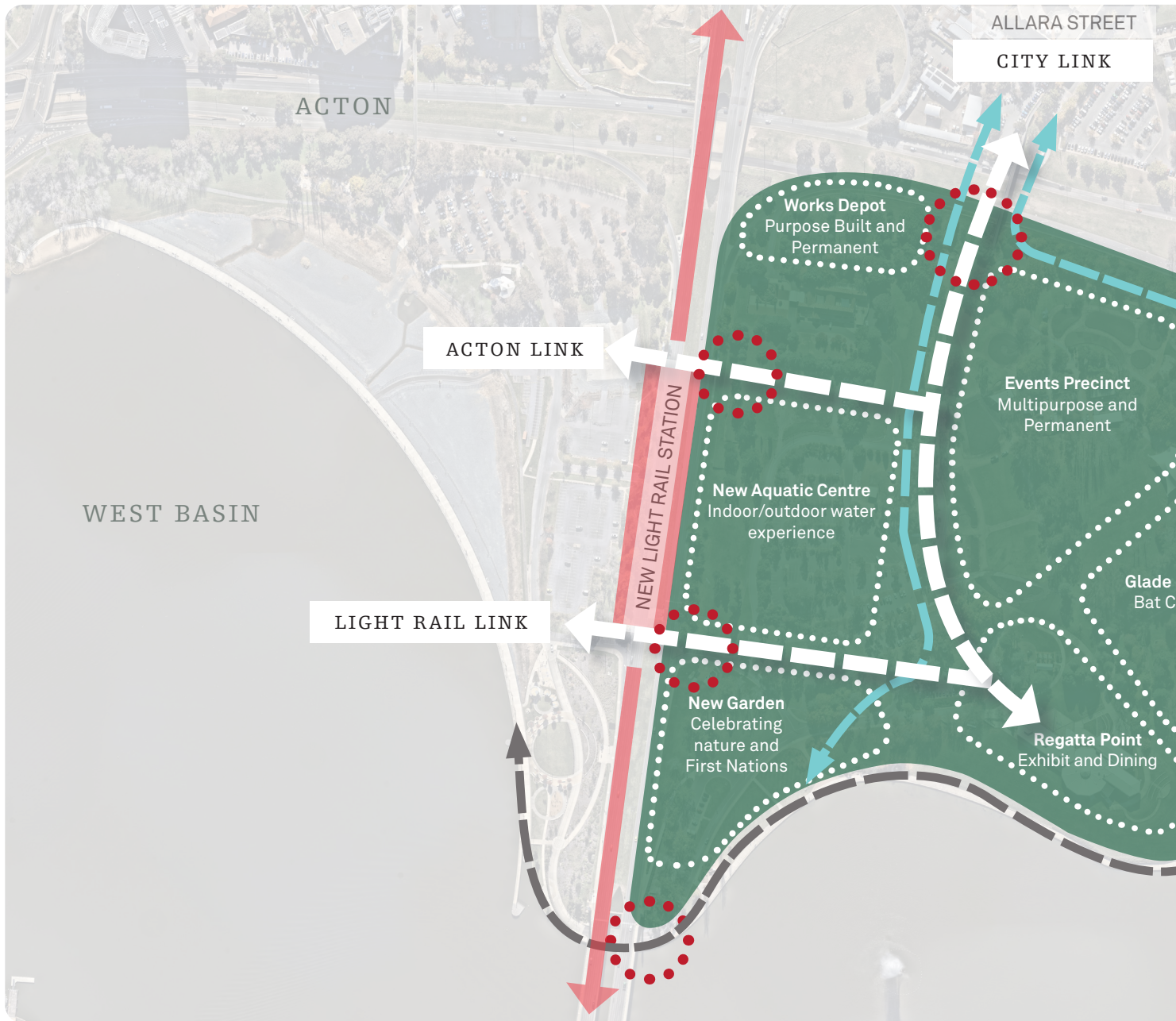
SEE PAGE 50

Foreshore parkland

Upgraded and refined park experience with seating, picnic shelters and new paths.

SEE PAGE 58





A park that serves national, regional and local needs.

Future work to Commonwealth Park needs to consider the park's various modes, levels of use and visitation. The level of amenity provided should be proportional to the amount and type of visitation that the area of the park is likely to incur (higher visitation areas will have greater levels of amenity).

Light Rail

A new light rail station serving Commonwealth Park will provide better public transport options and increase pedestrian flows to and from Commonwealth Avenue.

New Aquatic Centre

Potential location for a new aquatic centre on the site of the existing car park that is well served by public transport.

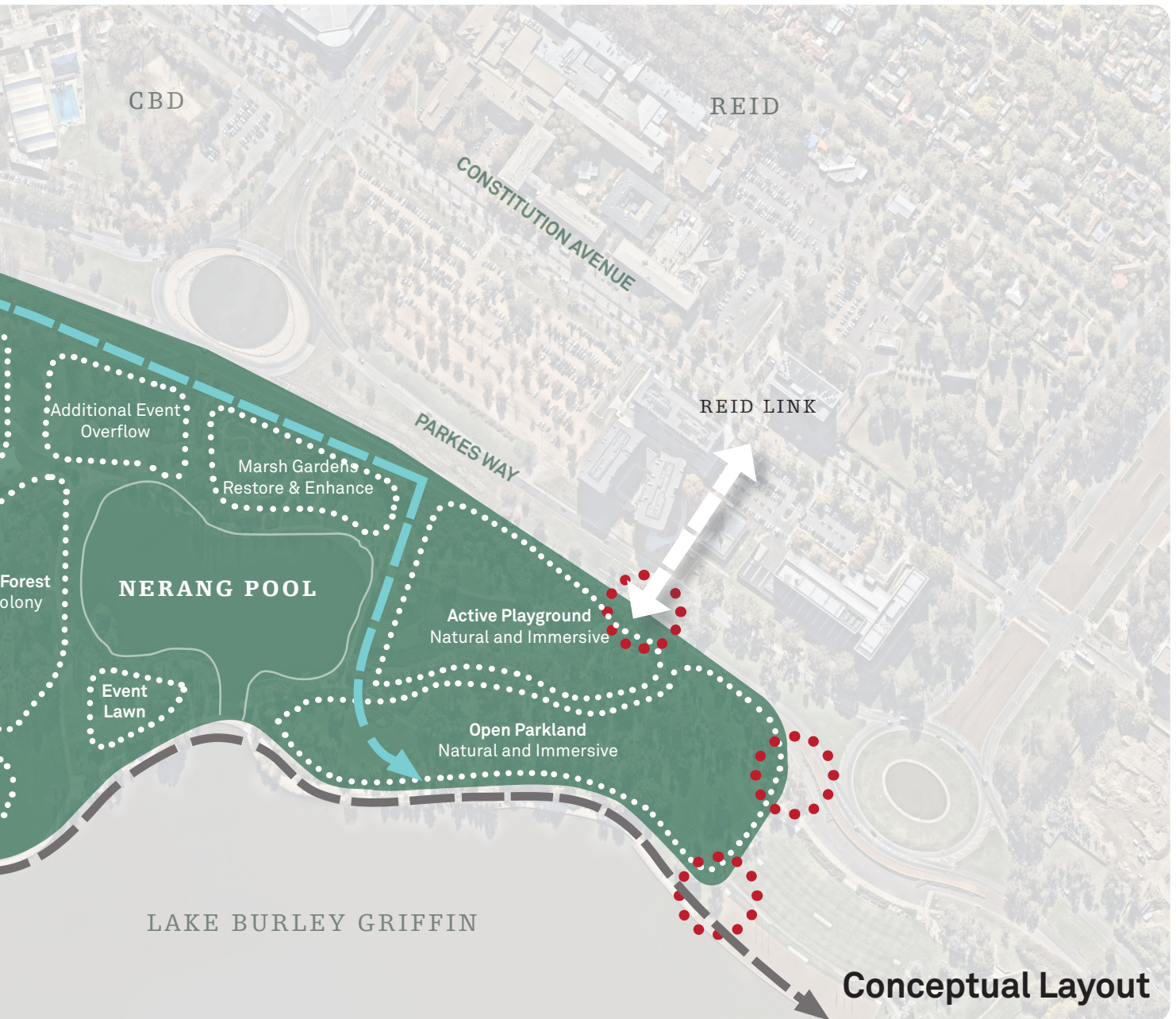
Works Depot

Relocated park depot to create more space for events.

Events Precinct

Upgraded amphitheatre lawns, new stage, technology and green room with permanent supporting areas for public amenities, exhibitions and events. Rationalised and concentrated Floriade events precinct with permanent infrastructure to reduce bump in and bump out impacts.

One park with a diversity of offerings, landscapes and scales



Conceptual Layout

Regatta Point

Maintained as the key visitor exhibition, cafe and restaurant venue for Commonwealth Park, with improved connections to the lake foreshore path and city.

Marsh Gardens

Renew and upgrade original marsh gardens including water systems planting and paths.

Nerang Pool

Restoration of pool and investigation of a new island in the pool with connecting paths.

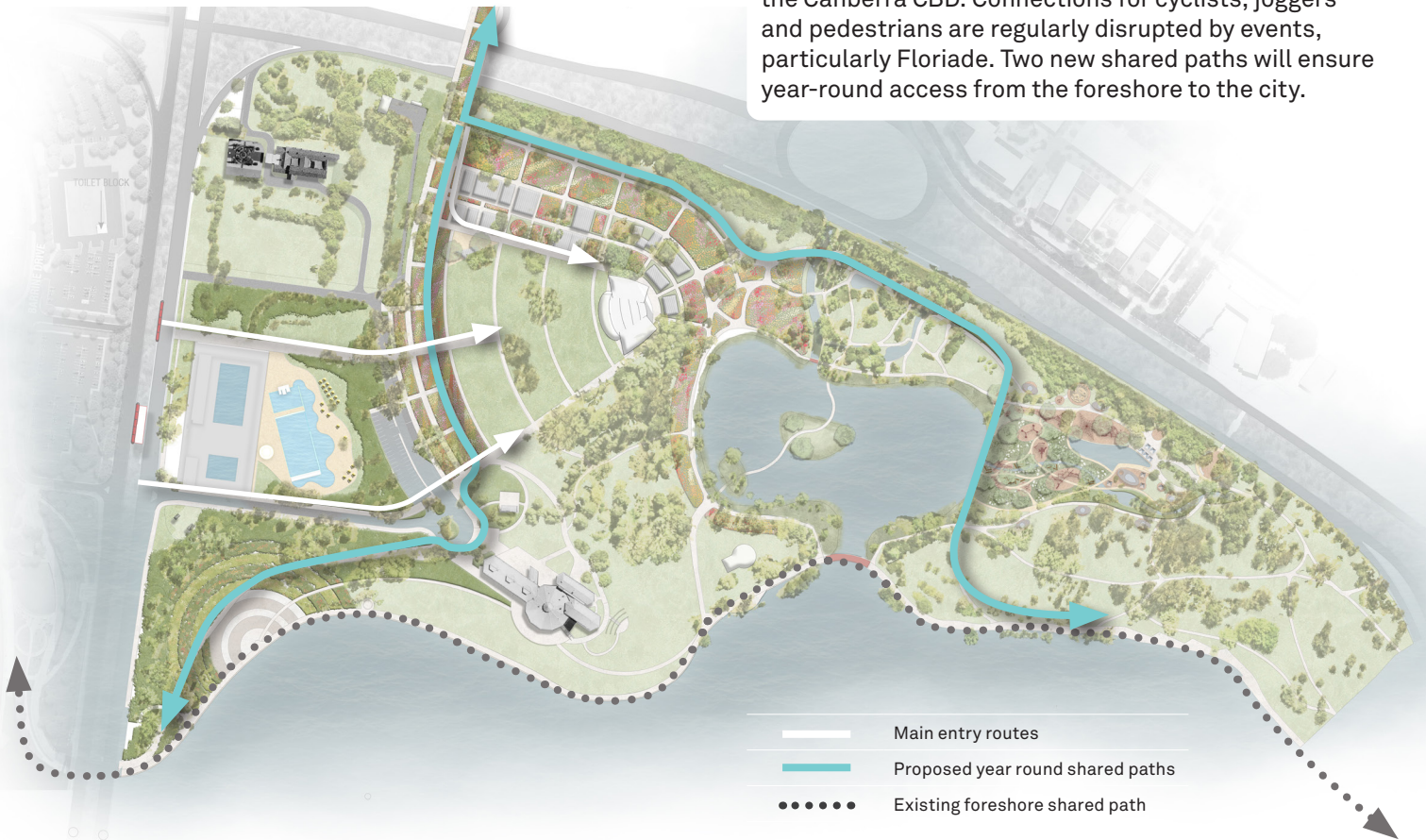
Active Playground

Major upgrade and design improvements to the play scape with focus on wild play and the natural environment. Activities supported by better amenities, new toilets, cafe/kiosk, seating, barbecues and picnic shelters.

	Improved links to Commonwealth Avenue and Canberra CBD
	RG Menzies Walk for walking, running and active transport
	New year round access routes for pedestrians and cyclists
	Proposed light rail
	Entry points
	Park Zones

Movement and circulation

The Allara Street footbridge connection is one of the few direct connections between the lake foreshore and the Canberra CBD. Connections for cyclists, joggers and pedestrians are regularly disrupted by events, particularly Floriade. Two new shared paths will ensure year-round access from the foreshore to the city.



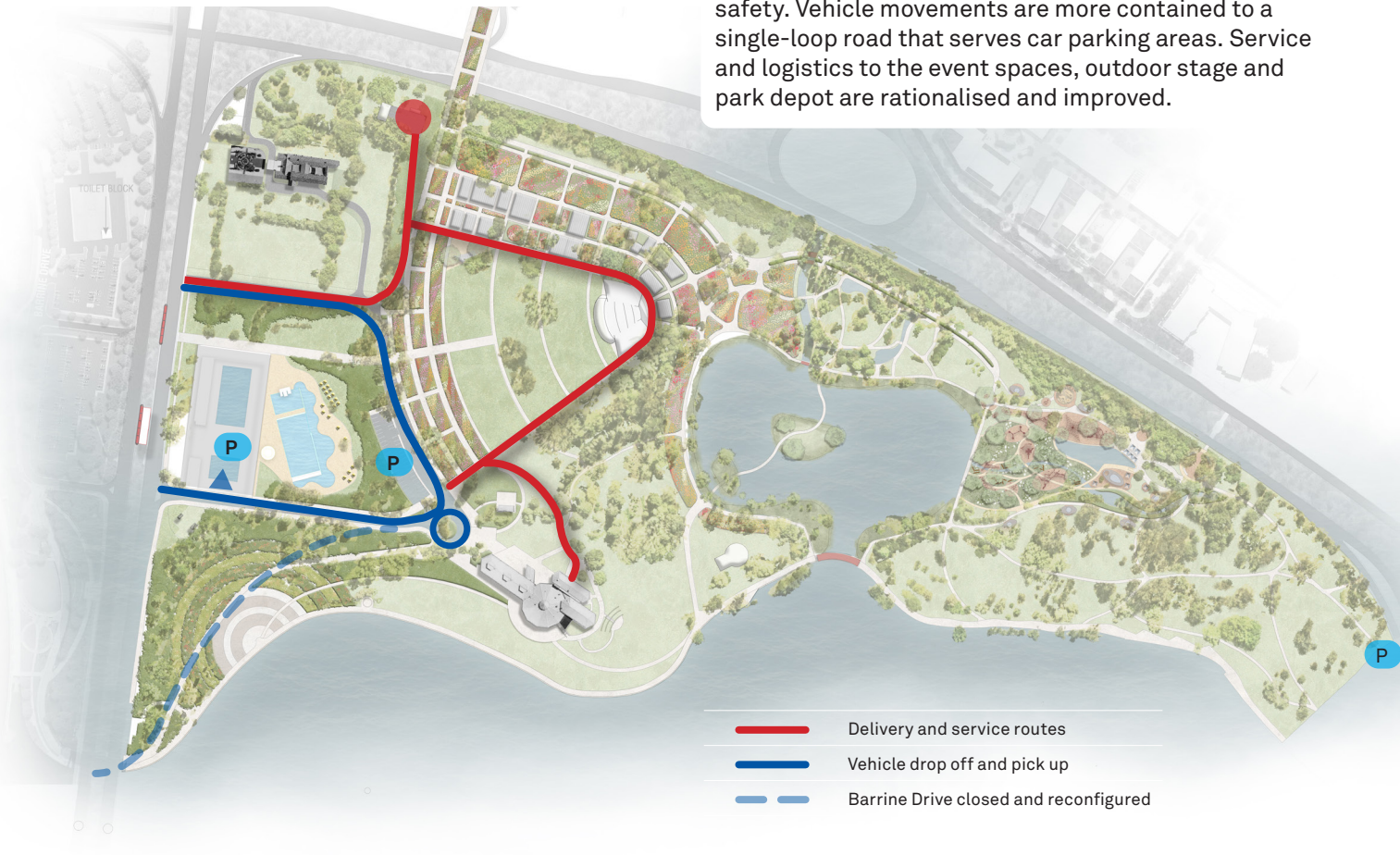
Improved access

Regatta Point was originally selected as a lookout because of its elevation and prospect to the south over the growing capital in the National Triangle. The existing level change of 10 metres from lake edge to the building's internal floor level, makes direct access difficult and indirect. It is proposed to provide new accessible ramps from the east and west approaches to provide equitable access and increase visitation to services, amenities and venues.



Vehicle and service access

The removal of Barrine Drive is proposed to improve the lake foreshore amenity and pedestrian and bicycle safety. Vehicle movements are more contained to a single-loop road that serves car parking areas. Service and logistics to the event spaces, outdoor stage and park depot are rationalised and improved.



Pedestrian circulation

Primary pedestrian circulation is articulated along a new axis connecting Regatta Point and the new footbridge. Minor changes to the pathway systems will provide new walking loops and routes within the park and around Nerang Pool and the Eastern Precinct.





Park fit for a national capital



Regatta Point



Regatta Point includes the National Exhibition Centre, Regatta Point Playground, Regatta Point Wharf and a grand sloped lawn on the lake foreshore. Current access to Regatta Point occurs from Commonwealth Avenue via separate entrances, from the northbound direction on the west under Commonwealth Avenue Bridge via Barrine Drive and directly off the southbound lanes.

The National Capital Exhibition was the first building in the park and one of the earliest tourist attractions in the National Triangle. The building hosts an exhibition that tells the story of Canberra, a restaurant and cafe, conference facilities and a visitor centre.



Whilst the site has a prominent elevated location with great natural outlook, it has created challenges accessing the lake edge. The concept vision provide options for future additions for compliant and accessible paths from the lake to the building.





VISION

Regatta Point is to be maintained as the primary visitor location in the park providing exhibition, food and beverage, dining experiences and orientation and information about the park, Canberra and the National Capital.

Improved access and visual connection to the venue will enhance the visitor experience, as a hub that links to the different parts of the park and is essential to the visitor experience.

Regatta Point will form the terminus and focal point of a new pedestrian civic axis that bends through the western precinct of the park, forming a strong and direct connection to the CBD via Allara Street and a future improved pedestrian crossing over Parkes Way.

Opportunities

1. BETTER CONNECTED

A new accessibility compliant walkway will connect the Regatta Point venues with the lake foreshore path and internal path network.

2. NEW LAKE TERRACE

An outdoor terrace will be a place to lookout over the lake, provide new outdoor dining spaces and a secondary arrival space for Regatta Point venues.

3. IMPROVED INDOOR/OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

An expanded forecourt will provide breakout spaces in a park setting for exhibitions, conferences, cafes and restaurants.

4. NEW PLAY

A revitalised arrival playground will build on original park approaches of Sylvia Crowe, including nature play and the themes explored in the National Exhibition Centre.

5. RATIONALISED CAR PARKING

Improved connectivity will reduce car parking needs. Car parking will be provided on grade and also under the proposed aquatic centre.



Accessible for all

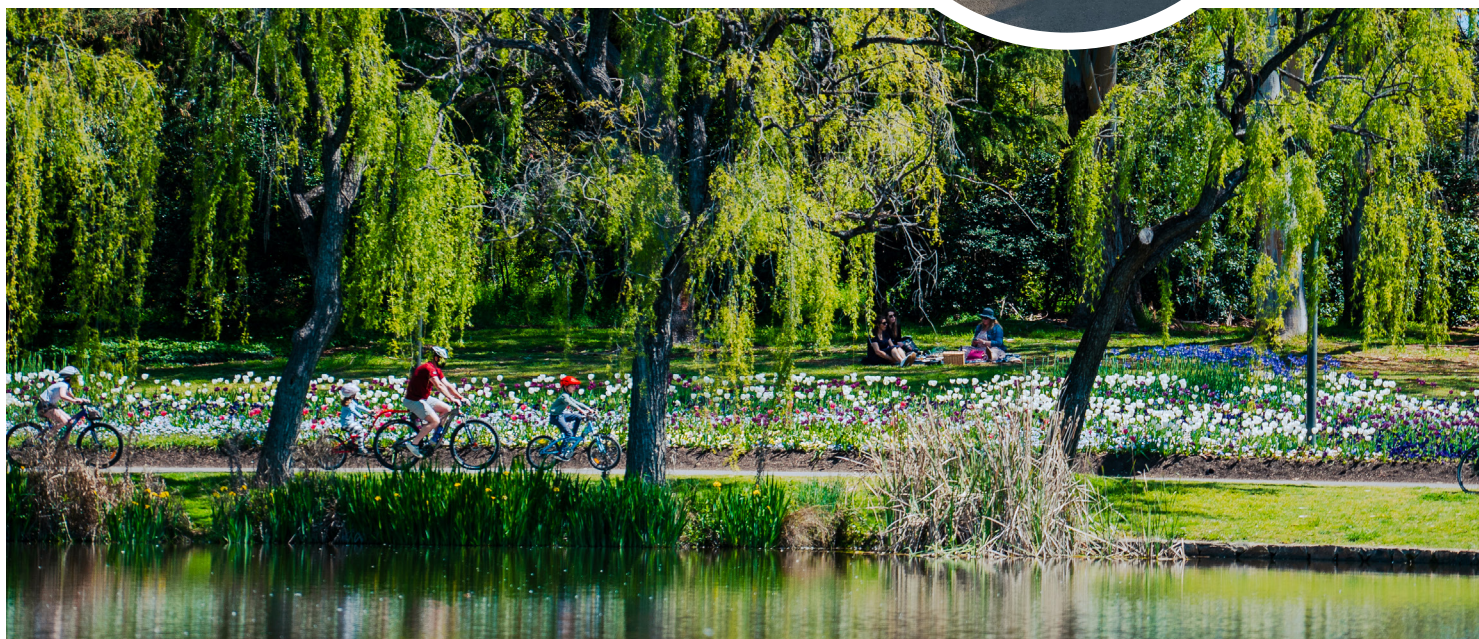
The elevation of Regatta Point has natural advantages in provision of prospect and views across Lake Burley Griffin and south across the National Triangle to Capital Hill. The completion of the lake foreshore path provided a new entry point to Commonwealth Park for many visitors. The steep lawned banks around Regatta Point at gradients of between 1 in 4 and 1 in 10 are a barrier for a range of park users including those using wheelchairs and prams moving between venues, events, destinations, lake and park paths.

Design investigations show it is possible to construct compliant ramps of 1 in 20 grade from both east and west approaches to the south side of the exhibition building. There is potential to add an outdoor terrace on the south side that provides a new external lookout over the lake and to the view beyond. A stone paved terrace would reflect the original kiosk building design of the early 1960s, and provide a new addition to the internalised experiences of the venues in the building and the exhibition.



1960s

2020s





Better connecting Regatta Point to the lake foreshore path



Artist impression

Event ready

OVERVIEW

The western side of the park is the most heavily visited and used part of Commonwealth Park. The precinct is the location of the National Exhibition Centre, visitor information, restaurant and cafe, and hosts the annual Floriade festival, music festivals and other community events. The proximity of the precinct within walking distance to Canberra CBD, car parking and public transport means that it is well located as an event ready space. The future extension of light rail coupled with increasing residential density and conference and exhibition visitation requires changes to the park to improve the visitor experience.



VISION

The Precinct will be designed to better handle the pressures and stresses involved with large-scale temporary events and gatherings.

The park is to remain a key public destination at all times of the year, not just for major events. Reducing the impact of events like Floriade and large-scale festivals and concerts to ensure a better balance between every-day use and special-event use.

Improvements in connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users is key to connecting the park to the city and surrounding residential neighbourhoods, hotels, convention venues, university and cultural venues. A more legible and enjoyable experience is proposed that extends the park to the city and invites visitors in.

Opportunities

1. LESS STRESS

Floriade as a permanent event space. This will reduce ongoing impacts on the park and will be more environmentally sustainable.

2. EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

Relocating the depot will facilitate the development of new exhibition and events spaces in the central areas.

3. BETTER CONNECTED

Replace the existing narrow pedestrian bridge to the north with a new greener bridge over Parkes Way and improve pathways to Commonwealth Avenue with lighting and safe, compliant access.

4. UPGRADE STAGE 88

New sound shell and green rooms, technical upgrades and regraded and expanded amphitheatre bowl with increased crowd capacity.

5. NEW PARK DEPOT

A purpose built and permanent works depot will allow for improved maintenance and a broader range of events.

Potential Precinct

View towards Lake Burley Griffin from Canberra CBD



Multimodal and seasonal

The suggested arrangement consolidates garden beds and rationalises facilities and precincts whilst improving year-round access between the lake and city



Floriade event gardens

SEASONAL EXPRESSION

Floriade is a landmark event held in the Spring of each year from mid-September to mid-October. It is a significant endeavour that utilises a large part of the park for around eight months each year. The park is impacted by earthmoving, temporary fences and the installation of flower beds, irrigation and associated structures that support the event. The relocation of the existing park depot would allow for a reconfigured public domain that better suits Floriade and the outdoor stage area.



Events and performances

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

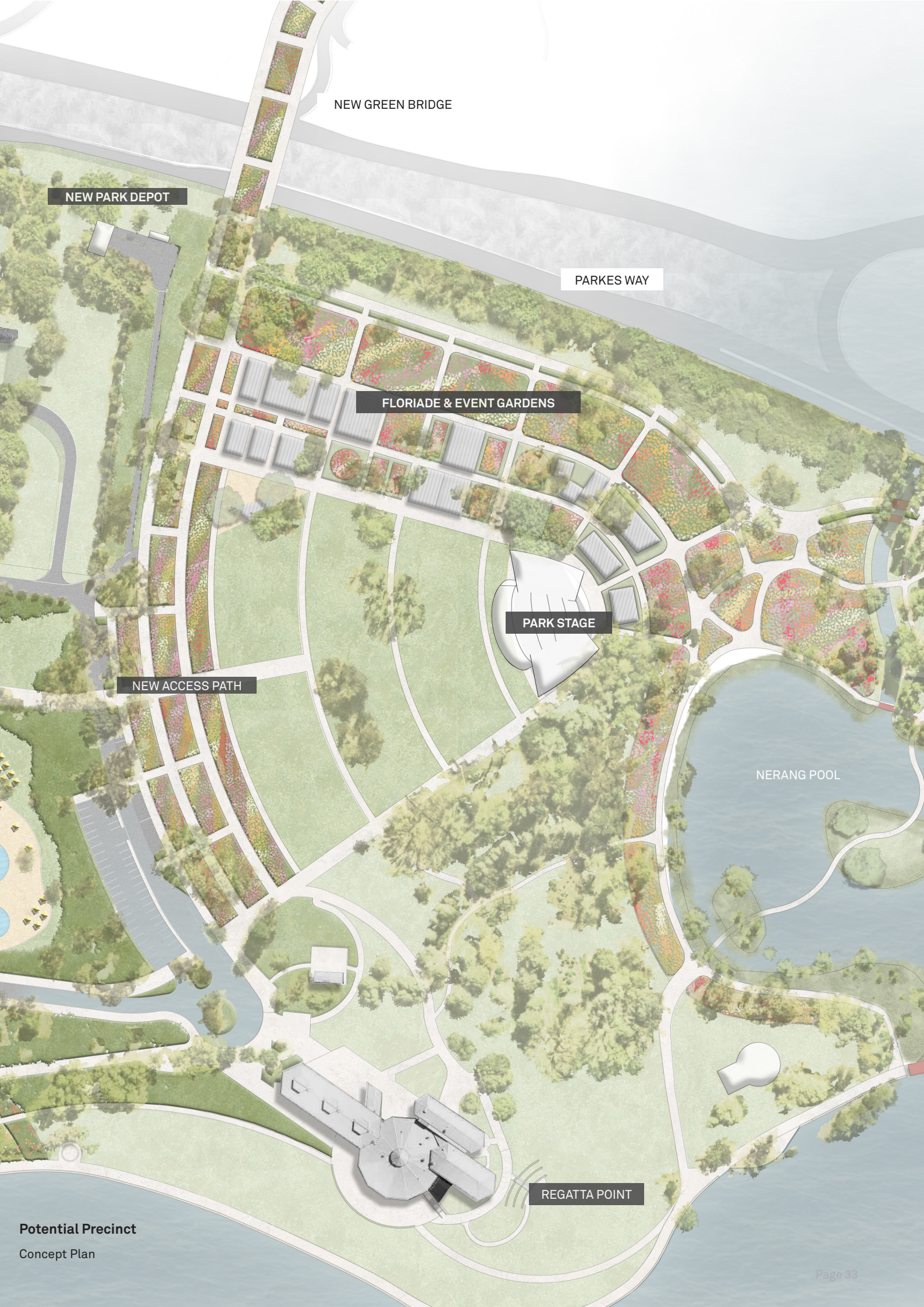
A state-of-the-art sound shell and stage could provide a new foundation draw card for major events. Additional capacity will be provided by a larger lawn amphitheatre, slightly regraded and arranged to improve sight lines, accessibility and improved drainage to provide wet weather resilience. Significant existing trees will be retained and provide shade for summer events.



Small events and exhibitions

PURPOSE BUILT

New architecturally-designed and well-considered display and exhibition spaces may be added to the northern precinct of the major events area. This clustered area could provide a range of pavilions and amenities that support event activity. Regatta Point and the National Capital Exhibition will remain the core year round visitor destination, with a new focus of events and exhibition offerings to support Floriade and major performances and community events.



NEW GREEN BRIDGE

NEW PARK DEPOT

PARKES WAY

FLORIADA & EVENT GARDENS

PARK STAGE

NEW ACCESS PATH

NERANG POOL

REGATTA POINT

Stage 88

OVERVIEW

For over 35 years, Stage 88 has been the primary home for outdoor events in Canberra with a range of concerts, theatre and music festival events.

Outdoor stages provide an alternative experience, ambience and scale to indoor venues. Around Australia venues like the Sidney Meyer Music Bowl in Melbourne, The Domain in Sydney and Riverstage in Brisbane provide unique, large-scale public event spaces for the warmer months of the year. Some have fixed stages, and others rely on temporary or seasonal stage set ups. An upgraded venue could provide cultural and economic value to Canberra with an increase in events and tourism spend.

Over recent years it has been recognised that Stage 88 no longer meets contemporary standards for outdoor performance. A range of issues including stage size, acoustic performance, outdated technology, lack of green rooms and inefficient bump in and bump out access have affected commercial viability and ongoing use each year.

Proximity to the Floriade precinct, the existing park depot and a lack of 'plug and play' facilities has meant that some larger events have moved or don't make it to Canberra. An upgrade would ensure the park offers an attractive outdoor event venue the equivalent to other capital cities in Australia.



dy shell, San Diego



OPPORTUNITY

There is potential to create an expanded and improved outdoor performance venue that enhances both performer and audience experience in Commonwealth Park. A proprietary or designed sound shell with larger stage area, increased back stage, new technology and new green rooms would redefine the event space, increase venue use and improve the visitor economy of Canberra.

Located adjacent to the city, hotel and convention areas, it is a natural fit with the wider city neighbourhood. The addition of new paths, arrival points and crowd control fence line options for different event sizes would allow the park stage to run more autonomously, with less impact on everyday park users.







An event ready park

Future Floriade



OVERVIEW

Floriade has been held in Commonwealth Park since 1988 (apart from Covid pandemic lockdowns in 2020 and 2021) and had its 34th edition in 2024.

In 2023, Floriade had 433,000 visitors over four weeks with a total economic impact of \$51 million injected into the city's local visitor economy.

Floriade is a landmark event held in the Spring of each year from mid-September to around mid-October. It reinforces Canberra's well known seasonal image — a place of vibrant autumns, cold winters, colourful springs and hot summers providing the full range of seasonal experiences.

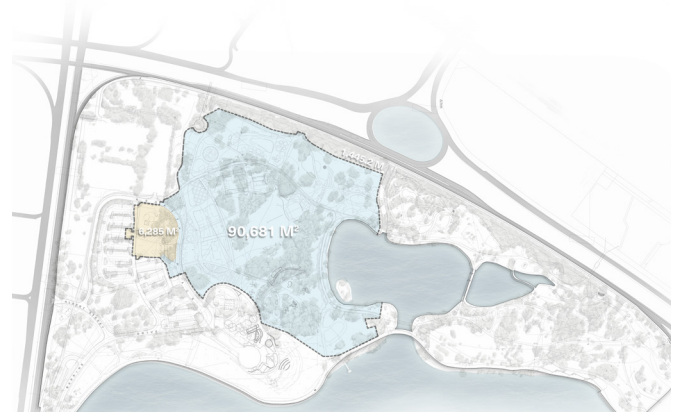
A key attraction is the ticketed NightFest usually run over three nights, including the weekend midway through each Floriade. Events include outdoor performances, music and light shows.

Design and production of Floriade is managed by the ACT Government, with an arrangement to use the land managed by the NCA.

It is a significant endeavour that utilises large areas of the Precinct for around eight months each year, roughly impacting a third of the park. The annual production involves long periods of construction, temporary fencing, planting and installation of temporary irrigation and temporary paths, followed by a period of restoration and refurbishment. Within months of the annual bump out, the cycle begins again.

Floriade 2023

- 90,000m² enclosed event area
27% of park



Artist impression

- 7,500m² planted flower bed areas (were used)
8% of enclosed event area (2% of park)





Colourful events

VISION

Evolution of Floriade to be a more efficient annual undertaking, improving its environmental sustainability, tourism and innovation agenda.

Minimise year-round impacts on other park users improving access to and from the city and proposed light rail stop on Commonwealth Avenue.

Improve arrival and event experiences and access with new multiuse facilities and amenities that support the outdoor stage and other events, exhibitions and community activities across the year.



Opportunities

1. LESS STRESS

Better accommodate Floriade with reduced impacts on the park, and environmentally sustainable approach with permanent and drop in garden areas.

2. PERMANENT FLORIADA AREAS

Mixing permanent deep soil garden beds with drop in planters that reduce the overall need for construction and demolition each year, using permanent irrigation.

3. PERMANENT YEAR ROUND GARDENS

Intermixed with the Floriade garden beds, permanently planted beds will provide colour, pattern and visual interest to the Events Precinct.

4. PAVILIONS AND DISPLAY SPACES

New pavilions and architecture to accommodate new event services, interior flower and plant displays, sculpture art and architecture.

5. IMPROVED LOGISTICS AND OPERATIONS

Better road and path layout to reduce impact on garden beds and lawns.

Event Spaces



PHOTO: NAOMI MILGROM FOUNDATION

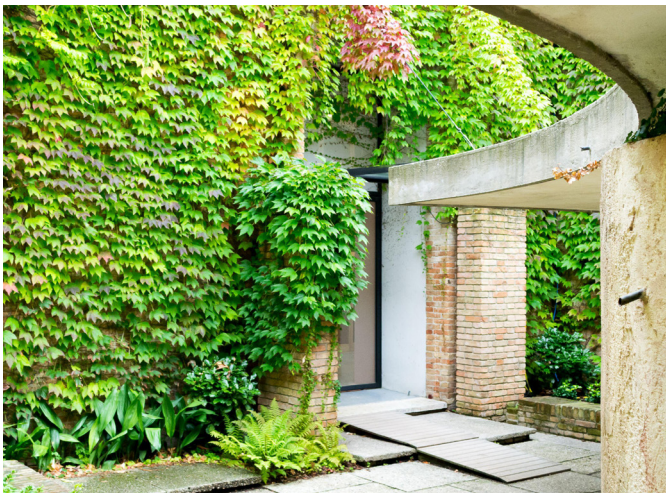
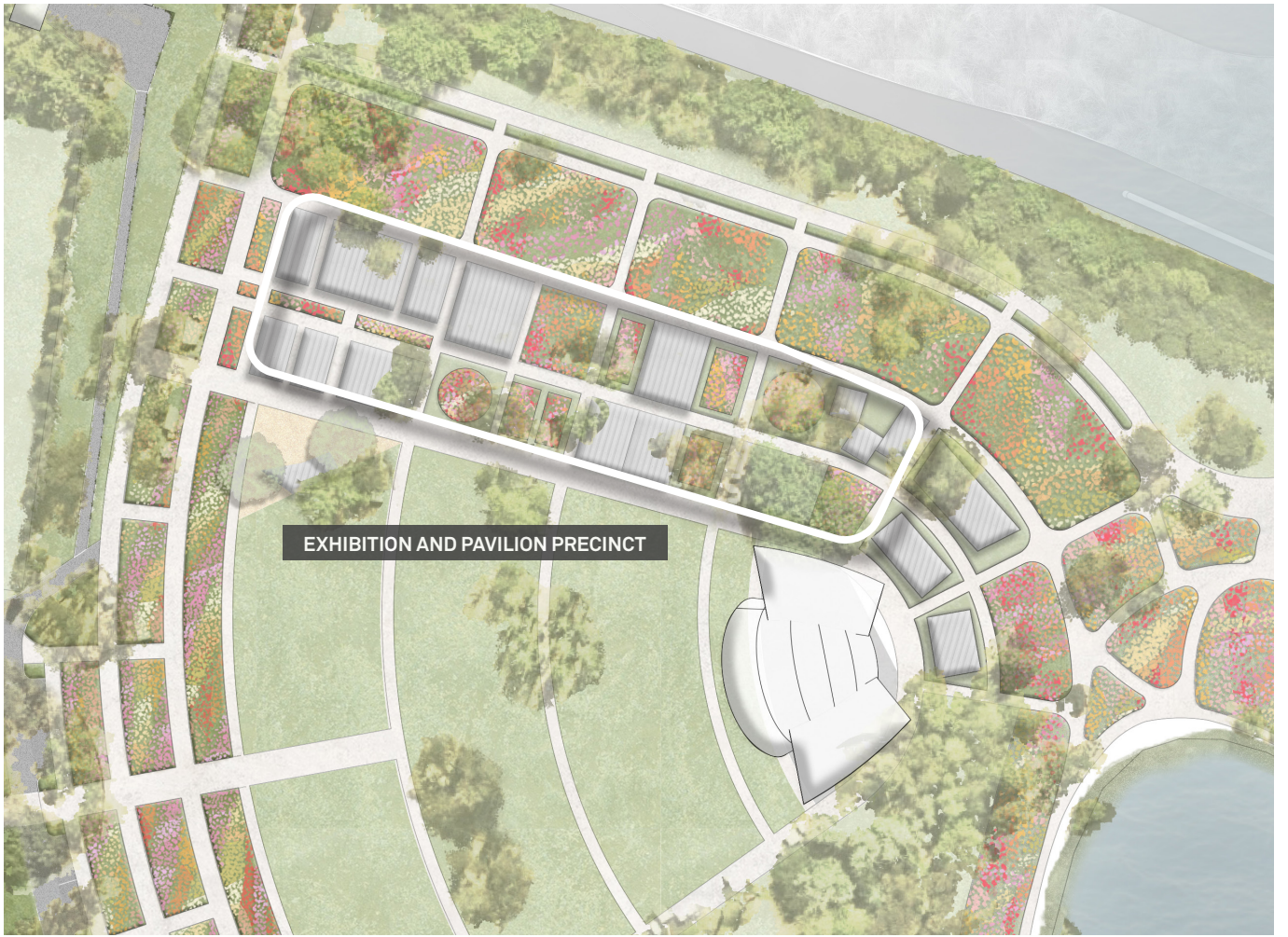


Promote innovative arts, horticultural displays, gardens, landscape design and architecture establishing a wider annual cultural program of events and activities.

The park could also become a home for architecture, design, sculpture and art alongside the evolving garden and horticultural exhibitions and events. Promoting creative industries, cultural capital and increasing the cultural role in the life of Canberra and the national Capital.

Investigate options for new structures and pavilions that enhance the visitor experience and the character of the park.

Events that add to the annual calendar of events in Canberra that would appeal to locals, national and international visitors. The precinct could become home to a national cultural discussion hosting conferences, exhibitions, gatherings and festivals.



New link to city

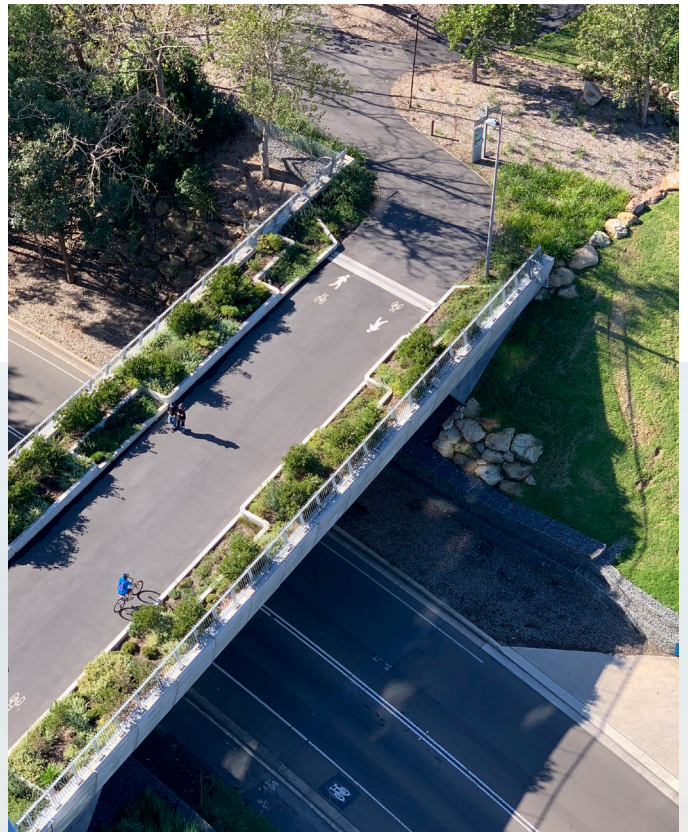
The existing Allara Street footbridge over Parkes Way was constructed in 1979 for the opening of the western extension of the dual carriageway road.

The bridge is not accessible and does not meet the current Disability Discrimination Act requirements which makes it not accessible to people with a disability. It is steep and narrow and does not provide suitable width for passing, in particular for cycle users.

The bridge location is well positioned along the Allara Street and Civic Walk link that directly connects the city to the park. This route also connects to other open city spaces such as Constitution Avenue, Glebe Park and the convention, hotel and exhibition precinct in the east of the CBD.

There is opportunity to replace the bridge with a wide concrete bridge that provides 1 in 20 graded ramps, parallel pathways and planting areas that extends the park and Floriade event mode into the city. The proposed bridge would provide year-round cycle, pram and wheelchair access between the city and the lake supporting visitors, commuters and recreational cyclists alike. The bridge would include lighting, seating and greened edges that will reduce the visual impact of the structure.

Greened bridge to Rozelle Parklands, Sydney



Footbridge at Sydney Olympic Park

PROJECT VISION

1. REPLACE EXISTING FOOTBRIDGE

Deliver accessible path connection to the city that accommodates people of all abilities and modes including walking and cycling, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams and strollers.

2. DELIVER A GREEN BRIDGE

Investigate options for planting, seating, banners and pathways on the bridge structure that extends the park and event experience and improves amenity for visitors, connecting city and park.



Connecting city and park





New Aquatic Centre

Civic pool first opened in 1955 at the height of a wave of national interest in competitive swimming and public recreation prior to the Olympic Games in Melbourne. It is now nearing 70 years in age and does not meet contemporary standards.

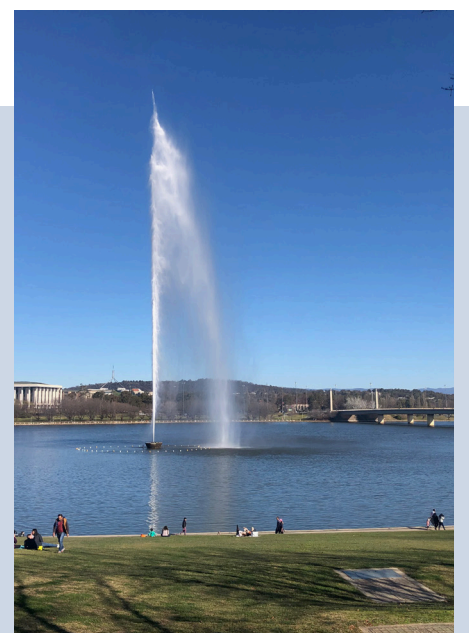
The existing pool is located in an expanding residential, education and commercial precinct in the CBD that provides opportunity to reshape the current pool site.

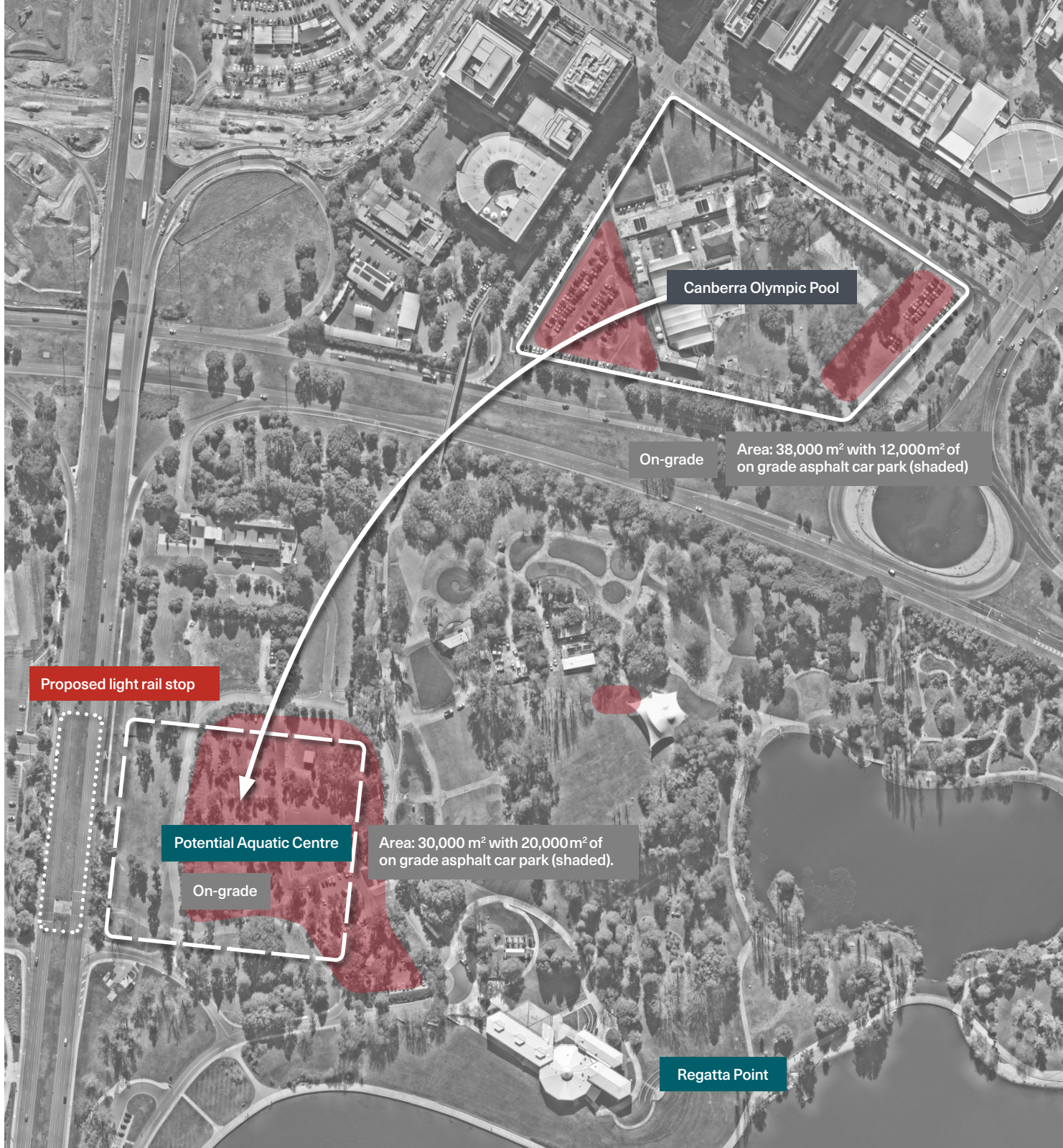
The site area of the existing pool is around 38,000m² including 12,000m² of outdoor asphalt paved car parking. A suitable site of similar size is located within Commonwealth Park adjacent to a future light rail stop on Commonwealth Avenue. The proposed site would better utilise the existing large 20,000m² area of asphalt paved public car parking located adjacent to Regatta Point. The original masterplan for the park did not include on-site parking, and its construction was criticised by park designer Sylvia Crowe at the time of its addition in the 1970s for encroaching on the park setting.

The potential for a new aquatic centre within Commonwealth Park could allow for a reshaping and replanting of the site, with a contemporary architectural and landscape response. The appropriate design solution could deliver a high-quality, landmark facility. Commonwealth Park has a strong connection to water and landscape and plays an important recreation role for Canberrans and visitors. A new pool would strengthen these associations and boost visitation and activation of the park throughout the year with light rail supporting improved access.



Canberra Olympic Pools and iconic diving tower (1960s)





Potential relocation of pool to Commonwealth Park

Initial investigations show that the scale of the existing Canberra Pool could be accommodated in the western precinct of Commonwealth Park, on the site of the asphalt paved car park. The addition of an Aquatic Centre is complementary to the recreational and landscape principles of the park. Car parking could be accommodated below ground, allowing for improved

amenity and intensification of use. The future light rail stop adjacent to the park will reduce demand for parking and increase accessibility to the park, major events and the pools.

- Potential Canberra Pool
- Existing Aquatic Centre
- Existing asphalt car parking

Vision

1. Water and place

Swimming pools and water reinforce the Commonwealth Park's location on the lake and the associated pools, ponds and wetland environments that were part of the original park design.

2. Part of the landscape, and part of the city

The proposed pools would address Commonwealth Avenue to the west, and be deeply embedded within the topography of Commonwealth Park, using endemic plants and gardens to define the outdoor areas, complementing the lakeside location and existing constructed water elements of the park.

3. Year-round swimming

The new Canberra Pool could provide an outdoor swimming environment located in gardens and landscape, coupled with an indoor pool complex for year round fitness, training, lessons and competition swimming.

4. Design excellence

Replacing the existing pool with a new high quality and contemporary aquatic facility befitting the city, site and landscape context is critical.

5. A pool garden

The pool could feel like a pavilion and waterscape set comfortably within the park setting, using topography, planting and gardens to provide a high amenity setting complementary to the original principles of the park design.

6. Active edges

The new pool would be located at the proposed light rail station on Commonwealth Avenue, providing a new active edge to the road environment, easy access by public transport, walking and cycling. New entrance paths to the park are located along the northern and southern edges of the pool site.

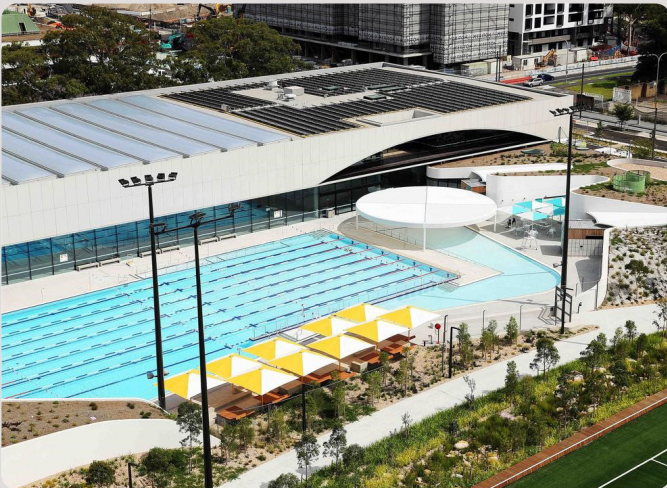


Pools in parks



Prince Alfred Park Pool Sydney, built 2010

The award winning pool by Neeson Murcutt Architects for the City of Sydney successfully embedded change rooms, toilets, cafe and utilities beneath a green roof. The form of the pool and the earth mounds have successfully nestled the built form in the landscape with soft edges between the park and the swimming areas. The upgrade of the park has also increased active use across a range of age groups for fitness, sport, play and relaxation with playgrounds, tennis and basketball courts.



Gunyama Pool Green Square, Sydney, built 2020

Built in the growing Green Square precinct, Gunyama provides both indoor and outdoor swimming facilities, adjacent to a year round sports field facility. The centre provides a range of recreational services including yoga, gym, aquarobics and child care.



Parramatta Aquatic Centre, Sydney, built 2023

An architecture competition winning scheme by Andrew Burges Architects set down the main outdoor pool within a circular ring built form that includes interior pools, change rooms, fitness spaces and amenities. The new pool replaces the 1950s civic pool within a former public golf course a short walk from Parramatta city centre.

Renewed landscape and foreshore garden



River course before construction of Lake Burley Griffin, early 1960s

BACKGROUND

With the future removal of Barrine Drive as a vehicle access route, there is potential to add around 2.5 hectares of new dedicated landscape to the park.

The gardens are proposed to be designed as a new community gathering and cultural space in the south west corner of Commonwealth Park on the foreshore of the lake, contributing to the ongoing understanding of landscape, environment, place and culture.

The site provides opportunity to include narrative, interpretation related to First Nation's history, the Molonglo River, creeks, waterways and the endemic flora and fauna of the Canberra region.



Vision

1. NEW GATHERING SPACE

A space designed as a new place of gathering and welcome located adjacent to the lake. New landscape will encourage a variety of uses and cultural events.

2. ENGAGES WITH WATER

A space to connect with water in a location where the Molonglo River previously ran through the landscape before Lake Burley Griffin was filled.

3. ENDEMIC LANDSCAPE & GARDENS

New plantings, gardens with shade and significant new endemic tree canopy.

4. BETTER CONNECTED

A new compliant path will provide improved connections between Regatta Point, the lake, gardens and foreshore paths.

A regenerative space with local planting and improved access



Nerang Pool & Gardens

OVERVIEW

The Nerang Pool is one of the key elements of the original park design, providing high value landscape and visual amenity. Nerang Pool is located centrally in the overall design of Commonwealth Park and is situated at a natural low point, playing a role in the stormwater management of the catchment area to the north.

Nerang Pool creates an intimate 'water room' that moderates between the larger scale of Lake Burley Griffin and the park. The water body assists in the articulation of three defined park spaces providing a change of character between the higher levels of activation in the west to the more local park and play offerings in the East Precinct.

Planting around Nerang Pool has enhanced the spatial character of this part of the park, with the Glade Forest to the west, tall poplars and willow trees along the pool edge.

The delight and character of this precinct is to be enhanced and restored reinforcing the aesthetic, functional and spatial character through new planting, restored water systems and infrastructure improvements.

VISION

1. RESTORED MARSH GARDEN

Returning the reticulated water and riparian planting to reinvigorate the original gardens.

2. UPGRADED GLADE FOREST

Upgrading under-planting and supplementing mature trees with new plantings whilst protecting the Grey-headed Flying-fox colony.

3. PERMANENT FLORIADÉ GARDENS

The north west valley to be established with garden beds for Floriade use with permanent irrigation and infrastructure.

4. NERANG EVENT LAWN

Lawns preserved for events, festivals and performances, concerts and temporary marquees or venues such as Spiegeltent.

5. NERANG ISLAND AND LOOP

Initial designs for the park outlined the opportunity for a tea house or structure on an island in Nerang Pool. The island with connecting paths and bridges would provide new vantage points for viewing Floriade and ways to navigate and enjoy the gardens.

6. NERANG POOL

Refurbish, restore and upgrade Nerang Pool to remove silt and weeds, and refurbish pool edges.

7. SUPPORT FOR WATER ACTIVITIES

Additional infrastructure to support activation of the pool including boating and model boating.





A city garden

The Nerang Pool and lakeside gardens form the core of the original picturesque setting of Commonwealth Park

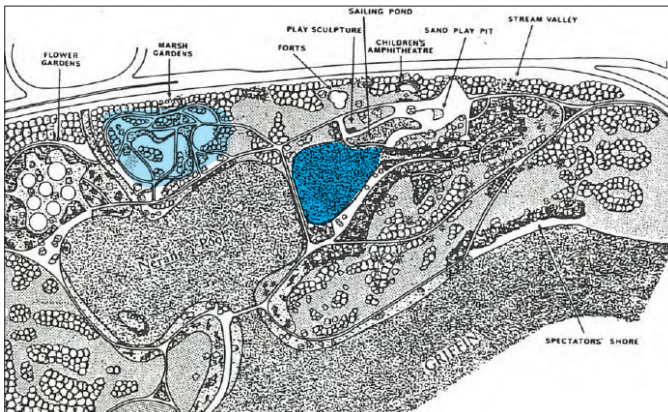
Nerang Pool and lakeside gardens form the core of the display gardens that draws on traditions of formal botanic gardens and city parks. The precinct has a number of spaces within and around the central water body, part of a series of more intimately scaled places to discover and explore. The initial ambitions of a park of 'horticultural excellence' have been somewhat diminished over time without sustained upkeep, maintenance, recurrent and new planting.

Nerang Pool has a large surface area with a low depth of an average of around one metre. It forms part of the local stormwater and overland flow management of the suburb of Reid to the north of the park. Mature trees flank the pond edges and provide places to pause and appreciate the picturesque nature of the landscape. There is potential to activate the edges of the water bodies, and to investigate the addition of a new island and connected bridges in alignment with the original park design.

The adjacent and connected Lily Pond to the east had suffered from a lack of long-term maintenance, with much of the pond filled with run-off sediment, weeds and reeds. It has recently been cleared and revitalised back to its original state. The possible integration of nature play in the creek and wetland environment in this area will provide greater use, increased amenity and bring play back to the centre of the park.

Re-establishing the reticulated water and riparian planting to the Marsh Gardens will reinvigorate the original gardens. Utilising the riparian planting to filter stormwater, sediment and organics will also improve water quality of Nerang Pool. Species selection should be well-considered and contribute to local ecology, whilst also featuring ornamental plants that express 'horticultural excellence'. This area is at the heart of the original 'city garden' and its restoration and enhancement should be prioritised.

Original concept plans for Nerang Pool, 1960





Opportunities

RESTORED POOL AND CREEK EDGES

Redesign edges of waterways with more endemic planting, and places to access and view the water.

PROVIDE FACILITIES

Consider additions such as storage or sheds that would benefit from proximity to the water, such as model boating, paddle boats and kayaks.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANTING

Review existing trees and replace ageing trees with succession planting to maintain the visual character, whilst increasing endemic biodiversity.

LEFT
Nerang Pool, 2024
North west shore

BELOW
Victoria Lake
Christchurch, NZ



Play Precinct



Modern play often utilises nature (mainly water and planting) to create a deeper and more connected and interesting experience. This approach does not differ greatly from those developed by Sylvia Crowe in Commonwealth Park more than 50 years ago. There is a unique opportunity to restore, enhance and build upon the play space and design heritage that brought play and nature together in the 1960s and 1970s.

The integration of existing elements such as the 'Stone Fort', play sculptures and children's amphitheatre into a broader landscape of play is recommended in this reinvigorated section of the park. Play should be for everyone. All abilities, ages and backgrounds could enjoy a sophisticated and enlarged concept play area in Commonwealth Park.

VISION

To reinvigorate, reinvent and extend of the playscape elements, nature play, water play of the precinct and general improvements to the eastern precinct of the park.

Improve visitor services and amenity to re-establish the park as the preferred destinational play space for all of Canberra and beyond.

Enhance the open parkland and foreshore park as a low intensity park space for quiet enjoyment, picnics, recreation, dog walking and enjoy the lake from the 'Spectator Shore.'

Extending Sylvia Crowe's original park vision



When Commonwealth Park was first designed in the early 1960s by inventive English landscape architect Sylvia Crowe and her team, most parks and playgrounds were still relatively formal and simple in design. Play areas were structured and usually used standard playground equipment such as steel slides, monkey bars and swings. The play spaces in Commonwealth Park were conceived at a time when a new approach to adventure play and a diversity of 'play in nature' experiences developed.

The park's existing play spaces whilst highly regarded and valued, require reinvigoration to meet current standards and approaches to play. There is opportunity to upgrade the play precinct as a significant destination attraction for locals from across Canberra and other visitors. Approaches to play spaces are evolving with new playscape experiences redefining the traditional playground and park. These new spaces breakaway from the use of traditional play equipment, and use artists, sculptors and engineers to create unique places to play, learn and take risks in. Engaging with local culture and environment are also creating more complex and fulfilling places to be in, stimulating both children and their carers.

Refreshing the original Children's Shore and Stream Valley

BELOW
Children's Pool and kids event, Commonwealth Park, 1970s



1960s park

Children's Shore & Lily Pond 1964
Amphitheatre 1967

Play all day



OPPORTUNITIES

1. LILY POND WATER PLAY

Investigate use of the existing Lily Pond area as an innovative water and nature play space that builds on the original Children's Shore concept, providing a new park playspace.

2. NEW AND IMPROVED VISITOR AMENITIES

New visitor amenities including accessible toilets, cafe/kiosk, shade structures, picnic tables and plenty of seating.

3. REFURBISH AND RESTORE

Refurbish and restore prominent elements of Sylvia Crowe's work including the Stream Valley precinct, the Children's Amphitheatre and Stone Fort.

4. BETTER PARK ENTRY EXPERIENCE

Improve the arrival forecourt experience and underpass with new lighting, paving and seating.

5. RETAIN AND ENHANCE FORESHORE PARKLANDS

The foreshore parklands enhanced with additional shared paths to improve access. New wayfinding, signage, public art, as well as additional tree planting, picnic shelters and barbecue areas could provide improvements to the visitor experience.





Play at the heart of the park

Recognise design innovation

The original design for the playgrounds and gardens of Commonwealth Park were new and innovative when first opened to the public. Acknowledging and recognising the design intelligence and approach is key to understanding the future direction of the park, particularly in the east precinct.

Strengthen and enhance play

Restoring and upgrading existing play elements and supplementing the park with a wider range of play spaces, water play, wild play, investigative play and 'play on the way' will add a new dimension to the park experience and invite a new generation of visitors and their carers.

An accessible place of welcome

Existing facilities, paths and transport to the city and surrounding areas are poor and compromised and should be upgraded to accommodate all abilities and interests.

Increased comfort and amenity

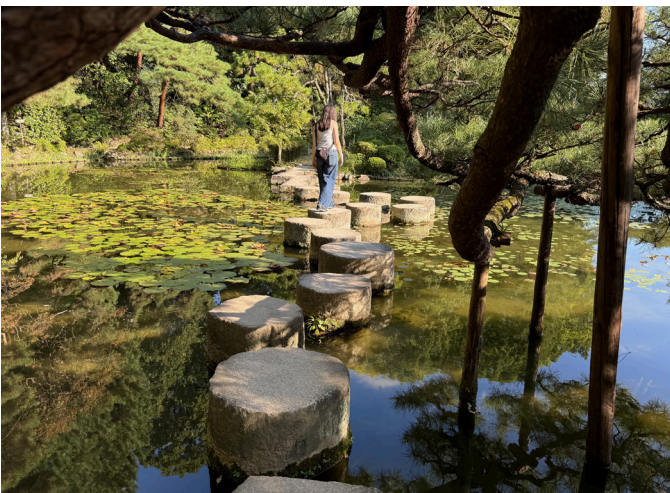
Busy, active play spaces require a layer of supporting amenities and places for carers, parents and grandparents, such as high quality public toilets, change rooms, cafes, kiosks, picnic shelters and shade.

Funded for the long term

The renewed park and playground needs to be built for the next three generations of families and visitors. Anticipating future needs, demographic changes and drivers is key to allowing the park to thrive. Maintenance and ongoing renewal should be part of the long term plan.

Educational, inspirational and wild

Everything about the park should be fantastic, inspire the mind and activate the senses of all ages of visitor. In the spirit of the original designers and their approach to connection with nature and skills based learning by playing, the design approach should be radical, inspiring and interesting.







New amenities, cafe and shelters

The Precinct currently lacks the amenities and comfort required to support longer visits. Apart from a small toilet block near the underpass entrance, there are few facilities to encourage extended stays.

To boost visitation and improve user experience, it is proposed to introduce high-quality, contemporary public toilets and change facilities. These will provide Disability Discrimination Act-compliant, equitable access, including non-gendered options, hand-washing stations, and baby change areas. The inclusion of changing places facilities—larger, fully accessible bathrooms designed for people with disabilities and high support needs—will ensure safe, private, and suitable bathroom access for all visitors.

To further enhance this area, new toilet amenities should ideally be co-located with a café or kiosk to serve both visitors and locals. A well designed café adjacent to the children's pool would establish a vibrant activity hub,

addressing the current lack of food and beverage options and places to meet socially in this part of the park. A food or coffee van could provide a trial for a more permanent future facility

Additionally, new picnic shelters would offer shaded, weather protected spaces for families and groups to gather. These shelters could be equipped with tables, food preparation areas and sinks, making them ideal for family gatherings, barbecues, birthday parties, and social events. To enhance convenience, these shelters could be available for bookings via an app or website.

Further upgrades, including increased seating, additional shade structures, water bubblers, and bike racks, will significantly improve the precinct's amenity. These improvements aim to foster a more welcoming and comfortable environment, encouraging repeat visits and creating a vibrant, well-utilised park space.

Picnic shelter, Parramatta Park, Sydney



Amenities, Sydney Park, Sydney



Small cafe kiosk, Venezia Giardino, Venice



Park kiosk, Sydney Park, Sydney

Versatile and inviting

Commonwealth Park provides open parkland with lawns and treed spaces for passive recreation, dog walking, picnics and other gatherings overlooking Lake Burley Griffin. Improvements to paths, seating and places to sit under shade and rain protection will improve the visitor experience, improve passive surveillance and opportunities to use all park spaces in a more versatile and inviting way.

Improvements to shared paths and lighting through the precinct.

New places to sit and enjoy the park and lakeside environment.



Contemporary amenities



New planting and paths to refresh and reinvigorate the park scale and ongoing rejuvenation



