

# **Tasmanian Open Space Policy and Planning Framework Summary**



Prepared for Sport and Recreation Tasmania  
Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts  
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# SUMMARY

## Context

### BACKGROUND

Open spaces contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by the Tasmanian community. Well-planned, designed and implemented open space planning policies aid in the delivery of a range of broader personal, social, economic and environmental objectives for the community.

In the absence of a state-wide approach to open space planning, there is a risk that approaches to open space planning at a state, regional and local level will continue to be ad hoc, lack consistency, not respond to emerging needs and fail to deliver the many benefits associated with good open space planning.

Climate change, the aging profile of the Tasmanian population, changing recreation participation levels and emerging activities, increased community expectations and changing work patterns are just some of the trends that will influence the need for, type and amount of open space required in the future.

Many of the open space plans prepared at the regional level (e.g. *Cradle Coast Open Space Plan 2009*, *Tamar Regional Valley Open Space System 2004*) and plans prepared for local councils share common values and strategic directions for improving the provision, development and management of open space. However, there is a need to develop clear and consistent policies and strategies that will help guide open space planning and provision in the future at a state, regional and local level.

The Tasmanian Government, through Sport and Recreation Tasmania, recognised this need and commissioned the preparation of an open space planning project for the state. This was considered timely given the current work being undertaken into strategic and statutory planning by the Regional Planning Initiatives for northwest, north and southern Tasmania.

The purpose of this project is to provide sound policy guidance and establish a framework for effective open space planning and provision at a state, regional and local level in Tasmania. In doing so, it is expected that this will help increase the capacity and commitment to better policy and practices in open space planning and allow for more effective integration of open space objectives within statutory and non-statutory planning tools.

The project was managed through a project steering committee consisting of representatives from Sport and Recreation Tasmania, each of the three Regional Planning Initiatives, and the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

#### DEFINING OPEN SPACE

An open space definition has been prepared which responds to the significant natural and cultural values of our Tasmanian landscape, and the physical, psychological and spiritual benefits that can be gained from engaging with these places. The definition also recognises the significant local, regional and state economic benefits that are associated with quality open space provision, such as tourism, recreation, events and attracting residential and other investors to an area.

Open space, in the context of this project, means:

Land and water settings maintained and managed for a range of environmental and social purposes and that are valued and may be used by the community, including:

- conservation of ecological processes (including ecosystem services such as clean water) native flora, wildlife habitat

- conservation of cultural heritage and aesthetic values

- sport, recreation and leisure functions – both passive and active, competitive and non-competitive and including open space user support facilities but excluding indoor facilities

- spaces to enhance the visual qualities and social character of urban and rural landscapes

- linear linkages, including trails, pathways, road reserves, riparian reserves, habitat corridors and beaches

- parks, playgrounds and other public spaces where the community can exercise, play, learn, and relax

- hazard management, including but not limited to flood control, bushfire hazard management, climate change and rising sea level.

## BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

Open space is a valuable community asset, providing a range of personal, social, environmental and economic benefits, including:

opportunities for a diverse range of physical activities, including organised sports and informal recreation - usually free of charge

contributing to the 'livability' of towns and cities, including linear linkages for alternative transport (e.g. off-road cycling and walking routes), providing safe spaces to gather and socialise, and enhancing scenic quality

'green spaces' for relaxation, contemplation, and play opportunities for people to connect with, and learn about their local environment, contributing to psychological as well as physical well-being

conservation of natural and cultural values, such as native flora, wildlife habitat, cultural heritage and aesthetic values;

contributing to the viability of local economies through encouraging capital investment

encouraging healthy lifestyles and providing opportunities for physical activity, potentially reducing healthcare costs through lowering diseases associated with inactivity and stress (e.g. obesity, diabetes, heart conditions and depression)

opportunities to engage with natural areas to undertake recreational activities (e.g. riparian reserves along waterways allow access for walking and fishing)

maintenance of utilitarian values, such as water storage, flood mitigation, and other environmental services (e.g. clean air and water)

the emerging function of contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation (e.g. through carbon storage, buffers to sea level rise, and by encouraging non-motorised transport etc).

## TRENDS INFLUENCING OPEN SPACE

The report refers to a range of national trends that influence or impact upon open space needs and provision, including:

- increased economic development and affluence
- increased community debt associated with financial borrowing regulations
- population growth
- changing work hours and employment structures
- changing family structures
- changing home and living styles
- ageing population
- more of a multi-cultural society
- growing community-based cultural interests
- growing levels of education
- new, different, more accessible and affordable technology
- greater policy focus on equity and access.

Whilst the majority of these changes have been positive in their impacts, changing work structures have dramatically impacted on volunteering and club activities. Further, pockets of disadvantage have emerged, particularly amongst newly-arrived immigrant groups, the aged, and residents in more remote rural communities that are progressively losing population and suffering the impacts of drought.

## OPEN SPACE ISSUES

The main issues and challenges associated with open space planning in Tasmania include:

- lack of an agreed definition and policy on open space, to guide the planning and implementation of open space provision at a state, regional and local level

the limitations of the planning system in being able to deliver sustainable open space outcomes on the ground, given the range of factors involved in open space provision, management and maintenance, that are outside of the statutory planning framework

inconsistencies in the provision of open space across the state, including the methodologies used to determine need and the 'tools' associated with open space planning (e.g. classification and hierarchy systems, zoning, developer contributions, development standards, and application of needs analysis)

inadequacies in open space provision, in part stemming from the use of inappropriate application or quantitative 'rules' such as the provision under the *Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1993*, which states that developers must transfer 5% of subdivided land to council for open space purposes

the statutory process for councils to follow in the disposal of open space land are complex and time consuming

limited integration of open space planning considerations with broader land use planning objectives at the state, regional and local levels, further contributing to the inconsistencies, and gaps in provision evident at a local level

limited resources available to undertake open space planning at all levels of government

difficulties associated with the management of a diverse open space system, including differing management regimes, provision of facilities, maintenance schedules etc

past subdivision and planning has delivered isolated pockets of open space rather than focus on the creation of open space systems, easily accessible to the community, connected by trail and public transport networks where possible

limited capacity to create integrated, flexible and multi-use venues, which consolidate resource requirements and avoid duplication of services and amenities, and therefore reduce overall operating and maintenance costs

the limited or ad hoc response to changes in demographic, sport, recreation, and other societal trends when considering open space needs (the system should not be 'fixed')

the slow recognition of the need to apply contemporary planning practice and societal concerns into open space planning (e.g. climate change, social inclusion), moving away from the traditional model of sport and recreation facility provision (e.g. single purpose, single user facilities) to a state-wide system of built and natural environments, aimed at improving the quality of life for Tasmanians on a range of levels.

#### STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

During the early stages of the study, regional forums were held with key stakeholders in Launceston, Devonport and Hobart. A state-wide forum was held in Launceston following release of the draft report. A final round of consultation with local government was held after public feedback on the draft report had been received and processed.

In addition to discussing the key issues presented above, the forums were important in identifying:

the role and value of all open space as part of a comprehensive open space system;

the requirement for a consistent approach and guidelines for open space planning

the need to rationalise the number of open space planning objectives;

support for planning and policy integration across different agencies and spheres of government;

the need for legislative change to achieve more effective open space planning outcomes;

the need for better planning tools to guide open space planning and provision;

the need for better resourcing and partnerships for the management and maintenance of open space;

that open space planning must be informed by community needs rather than standards of provision;

that planning schemes and development control processes are not the only tools for improving open space planning and greater emphasis should be placed on achieving greater strategic planning, use of outline development plans and legislative change; and

the opportunity for greater co-ordination and information exchange about open space planning between different agencies.

## **Developing a state-wide open space policy and planning framework**

### **B E N E F I T S**

The preparation of a state-wide open space policy and planning framework will provide a range of benefits, these include:

the provision of a consistent definition, suite of objectives and policies to guide open space planning and management at a state, regional and local level

the provision of direct assistance with the creation of an open space system that better reflects the needs and aspirations of the Tasmanian community, and that has the capacity to be adapted to meet changing needs

guidance within the development of effective open space planning tools, including a consistent open space classification and hierarchy system, developer contribution policy, demand analysis policy, and requirements for the preparation of open space plans

greater recognition of open space as a legitimate land use across all levels of governance.

## V I S I O N

A vision for the Tasmanian open space system is:

Tasmania will have a diverse, comprehensive and sustainable open space system, providing health and well-being, environmental, sport and recreation, social, and economic benefits. The Tasmanian open space system will be developed and managed in response to the needs of the community and visitors, whilst respecting our unique environment.

Four principal objectives have been formulated to support this vision, along with 15 key policy statements for these objectives, as shown in Table 1.

The report sets out 60 recommended strategies to achieve these objectives and policies. The strategies within the main report have been grouped to cover policy areas of planning and governance, land management, training and education, design, marketing and promotion.

<b>OBJECTIVE 1: To Establish an integrated and consistent open space policy and planning framework for Tasmania</b>
Policy 1: The Tasmanian open space planning framework will provide a strategic, 'whole-of-government' approach to open space planning and provision in Tasmania.
Policy 2: The Tasmanian open space planning framework will incorporate open space policy guidance to aid integrated state, regional and local planning.
Policy 3: The Tasmanian open space planning framework will foster consistency in the adoption of planning tools and processes to support effective open space planning.
<b>OBJECTIVE 2: To have the capacity to manage an open space system that contributes to environmental sustainability</b>
Policy 1. The Tasmanian open space system will protect and enhance ecological processes, biodiversity conservation and environmental services.
Policy 2. The Tasmanian open space system will protect and enhance cultural heritage, local character and aesthetic values.
Policy 3. The Tasmanian open space system will contribute directly and indirectly to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
Policy 4: The Tasmanian open space system will facilitate non-motorised transport (or 'active') transport, minimise emissions, and lower Tasmania's carbon footprint.
Policy 5: The Tasmanian open space system will be managed in a cooperative way, with the various land managers and the community working in partnership to achieve environmentally sustainable outcomes.
<b>OBJECTIVE 3: To support an open space system that contributes to social inclusion, community connectivity and community health and well-being</b>
Policy 1: The Tasmanian open space system will be developed and managed in collaboration with the Tasmanian community, and be based on demonstrated need.
Policy 2: The Tasmanian open space system will facilitate community health and well-being, including physical activity through good design, linkages, and quality facilities.
Policy 3: The Tasmanian open space system will be accessible and well-connected.
Policy 4: The Tasmanian open space system will be equitable, and respond to issues such as mobility impairment or disability, social isolation, economic and environmental disadvantage.
<b>OBJECTIVE 4: To manage an open space system that contributes to the Tasmanian economy</b>
Policy 1: The Tasmanian open space system will be planned, developed and managed with consideration given to delivering a potential a range of economic benefits to the Tasmanian community.
Policy 2: The Tasmanian open space system will improve Tasmania's competitiveness as a destination for visitors, and as an attractive place to relocate and do business.
Policy 3: The Tasmanian open space planning framework will support greater public and private investment in appropriate infrastructure and services that benefit access, use and management of Tasmania's open space values.

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**Table 1** : Objectives and policies

## **Implementation**

The key requirements for implementing a state-wide open space policy and planning framework are:

establishing clear and improved governance in relation to open space planning and provision

adopting a suite of planning tools to assist implementation of the state-wide open space policy and the planning framework

developing sufficient capacity and commitment to ensure effective and sustainable open space planning, provision and management.

### PLANNING TOOLS

A range of planning tools have been developed to aid more effective open space planning within the state, these include:

preparing an audit of open space supply

adopting an open space hierarchy

adopting an open space classification system

improving the open space planning process

achieving consistency in planning scheme zoning provisions for open space in the future.

### **Open Space Hierarchy**

An open space hierarchy refers to the scale of the area served or the catchment from which the open space attracts users, as well as the 'status' of the facilities provided (e.g. national-level mountain bike course). A hierarchical classification of open space is an invaluable planning, management and information tool. From a planning perspective, the position which a facility occupies within a hierarchy provides an indication of the role it is expected to perform and thereby, the size of the site and the scale and quality of the amenities, services and other resources which could be expected to be provided. These factors will generally be different for each level of the hierarchy.

From a management point of view, the position of a resource in a hierarchy provides an indication of the maintenance inputs, which should be, or will need

to be allocated to it, and which activities might not be permitted to use it. This helps to ensure the limited resources are used effectively and efficiently, rather than spending scarce resources on all open space areas regardless of their importance and what role they serve in the overall open space system. The following hierarchy for open space was presented:

Local  
District  
Sub-regional  
Regional  
State  
National

#### **Open space classification system**

Each 'parcel' of open space can be classified into different types that are generic in characteristics and functions, and are therefore, likely to require similar management responses. This process assists significantly in understanding what mix of open spaces exist within the current system, and where there are possible gaps or overlaps.

A proposed classification of open space types has been derived from a range of open space studies conducted over the past 15 years. The proposed categories are:

Parks  
Outdoor Sports Venues  
Landscape and Amenity  
Linear and Linkage  
Foreshore and waterway  
Conservation and Heritage  
Utilities and Services  
Proposed Open Space.

For each category of open space, a brief outline is provided to:

define the open space category

the purpose of the open space

amenities which may be provided.

The above classification system (or similar versions) has been applied within local council Open Space and Recreation Strategy Plans for the City of Launceston, City of Burnie, City of Glenorchy and Municipality of Huon Valley.

It is expected that the classification system will be a more effective tool for local area planning given the diversity and multitude of open spaces being managed by local councils. However the classification system will support strategic open space planning within a region or metropolitan area. At the state level, it may have limited value for future planning given the diversity of land tenure types managed and maintained by the State Government. In this regard, land managers typically have other management tools to assist with future planning e.g. code of practice, generic management plans and policies covering land tenure types. However the classification provides the planning capacity for assessing consistency across the open space system.

#### **Open space planning process**

It is critical that the planning and/or providing agencies are very clear about what they want to achieve through an open space planning process and about the needs and aspirations of those for whom they are providing. This planning tool proposes an open space planning process based on open space studies conducted over the last 15 years.

The stages of an open space planning process are:

1. Agree on the need for open space planning
2. Establish a Project Steering Team with representation from all key stakeholders
3. Define the provision purpose, principles and objectives
4. Review the policy context
5. Establish and implement a community consultation program
6. Evaluate the current and projected demographic characteristics
7. Establish an open space inventory

8. Apply the open space classification and hierarchy system to the inventory
9. Assess community and user needs
10. Assess trends in open space provision, use and need
11. Identify improvements to existing provision and *additional* provision ('Needs Analysis')
12. Identify sites for acquisition, reallocation and development
13. Proceed to acquisition and development

Although they are listed in a numbered sequence, it is possible to begin at a variety of points depending on the specific circumstances that apply. In some instances a reiterative process may need to be followed as the findings of later steps in the process may lead to or warrant a rethinking of earlier stages of the work.

These stages, or tasks, can be applied to a range of issues and contexts ranging across all open space types and across differing scales of development. The process outlined is generic in nature and may well need to be tailored to specific situations and tasks. Depending on the situation, some elements will almost certainly need to be given greater or lesser attention in light of the project scale, previous research and planning and the degree to which the desired outcomes are known. At the very least, the process can be used as a checklist of issues that may need attention and resolution.

### **Planning scheme zones**

The possible range of zones to be included as common elements in future Tasmanian planning schemes is currently being reviewed under the guidance of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The study recommends that:

there should be one open space zone with planning provisions that clearly differentiates between the planning and development requirements for active use/developed or 'formal' sporting sites, compared to more passive/less developed, or 'natural' open spaces

other zones, such as the proposed Environmental Management Zone, should be used to identify land which is also deemed to be open space (e.g. riparian reserves) and should be managed for environmental values as a primary purpose, with appropriate recreational use as secondary purpose

improved 'checks and balances' should be introduced into legislation or statutory processes for the disposal of open space to give greater security to community concerns about the potential loss of open space e.g. classification of community land and operational land the broader values and aspects of open space (e.g. contributing to health, well-being, livability, social inclusion) should be integrated within the subdivision approval process, the preparation of outline development plans, the intent and planning provisions of other zones, to support good design and better development outcomes related to community open space.

#### ACTION PLAN

An action plan has been prepared to guide the steps involved in the implementation process over the next 2 years. The focus is placed on those actions, which have priority and will need to be implemented so as to support the ongoing implementation of the recommended strategies for each of the policy objectives listed.

Table 2 sets out the recommended action, responsibility and proposed timing for the completion of the task.

No	Recommended action	Responsibility	Timing
1	Review and adoption of the open space policy and planning framework to help facilitate a commitment towards achieving a whole-of-government approach.	State Government - Tasmanian Planning Commission, DPAC and DEDTA (Sport and Recreation Tasmania)	6 months
2	The preparation of an Open Space Advisory Guidance Policy and to foster infusion within a range of existing government policies that are interrelated to achieving effective open space planning e.g. health, transport, social inclusion, environment, transport.	Tasmanian Planning Commission in association with all relevant government agencies	12 months
3	Integrate the open space policy and planning framework within the current preparation of the regional land use plans and common elements for planning schemes (e.g. common definition, zone and purpose statement).	Tasmanian Planning Commission, Regional Planning Teams and support of local councils	12 months
4	Promote the basic planning tools to aid more effective open space planning including: preparing an audit of open space supply; adopting an open space hierarchy; adopting an open space classification system; and improving the open space planning process.	State Government and local councils – facilitated by Sport and Recreation Tasmania	12 months
5	Support the implementation of core policy documents such as A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania, the State Physical Activity Plan and Healthy By Design: A Guide to Planning and Designing: Environments for Active Living, which are clearly linked with the need for achieving more effective open space planning.	State Government – DEDTA (Sport and Recreation Tasmania, PPAC), Department of Health and Human Services	Ongoing commitment
6	Undertake a review of the provisions of the <i>Local Government (Building &amp; Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1993</i> and other relevant Acts to consider more effective powers for councils and other land managers in acquiring and managing open spaces that reflect best practice in open space provision.	State Government – Parliamentary Legislation Committee	18 months
7	Prepare regional and metropolitan open space strategy plans consistent with the open space policy and planning framework and the direction of the regional land use plans.	Partnership resourcing between State Government and local councils	Ongoing commitment

**Table 2** : Implementation action plan

No	Recommended action	Responsibility	Timing
8	Support the commitment of land managing agencies and councils in the preparation of open space management plans, local open space strategy plans and master plans consistent with progressing the open space policy and planning framework.	State Government (Sport and Recreation Tasmania), local councils	Ongoing commitment
9	Develop a case for increased funding and resourcing for land managers and council to be directed towards open space planning, development and management based on the beneficial relationship between improving community access to open space and achieving more active, equitable and healthy communities.	Inter-agency working group involving all relevant agencies including land managing agencies	18 months
10	Incorporate climate change research and 'best practice' into open space planning, including strategies and actions that are intended to mitigate the predicted impacts of climate change (e.g. retention of native vegetation for carbon storage, minimising emissions), and those that are aimed at impact adaptation (e.g. the role of foreshore 'buffers' to sea level rise and storm surge).	State Government – DPAC Tasmanian Climate Change Office	18 months
11	Foster the development of an open space system that is well-connected to residential areas and other community destinations by a network of trails and public transport routes.	Local councils, State Government (e.g. guided by documents such as the <i>Trails Tasmania Strategy</i> , <i>Tasmanian Walking and Cycling for Active Transport Strategy</i> , <i>Healthy by Design</i> , regional and local transport plans)	Ongoing

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**Table 2** : Implementation action plan (cont)

# Tasmanian Open Space Policy and Planning Framework

## About this document:

The Tasmanian Open Space Policy and Planning Framework is made up of three documents:

- Tasmanian Open Space Policy and Planning Framework: **Summary**
- Tasmanian Open Space Policy and Planning Framework: **Main Report**
- Tasmanian Open Space Policy and Planning Framework: **Attachments**

The Tasmanian Open Space Policy and Planning Framework was prepared by Inspiring Place Pty Ltd with HM Leisure Planning Pty Ltd.

A copy of this document can be downloaded from the Sport and Recreation Tasmania website:  
[www.sportandrecreation.tas.gov.au](http://www.sportandrecreation.tas.gov.au)

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