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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kings Park is one of four major parks within the residential area of the town of Seymour. The original park was gazetted as a reserve in 1903 and was developed as a public recreation reserve from 1905. Since its development, the now 14 hectare site has been used for regional agricultural shows and as Seymour’s premier sporting venue. The park is zoned Public Park and Recreation and its Crown land section is reserved for the purpose of ‘public recreation and showgrounds’.

The park is home to a number of sporting clubs and other community groups. It is the venue for a regular market and major events which attract many visitors and overnight tourists to Seymour.

Council has appointed a community-based Committee of Management to manage the park under a Funding and Service Agreement (FASA) with Council.

The Committee, in conjunction with Council, has planned and delivered extensive improvement works at the site. In 2007 the Committee developed a Master Plan, which was adopted by Council and has informed works at the site since.

More recent planning has identified a number of issues at the park which have been considered during the development of the Master Plan 2014 –

- condition of a number of buildings and structures,
- opportunity to consolidate building-based services,
- improving the usability of some activity specific facilities by making them fit for purpose, and
- lack of services for little athletics and netball.

Dependent on further planning and feasibility work, and the availability of funding, the proposed improvement works include –

- Higher priority (Years 1-4) – netball facilities, little athletics facilities, sporting pavilion improvements, fire track renovation, agricultural pavilion improvements, playgroup facility upgrade, public toilet renewal, and facilities to support use of the second oval.
- Medium priority (Years 5-7) – exhibition building upgrade, road/car park improvements, irrigation improvements and playground upgrade.
- Lower priority (Years 8-10) – cutting horse facility improvements, cricket training nets relocation and upgrade, main oval sports lighting improvements.

Kings Park is a regionally significant park with a rich history. It is the only site in Mitchell Shire with a primary function as a showground. It is also the Shire’s premier sporting venue. Site infrastructure and services reflect this unique role in Mitchell’s open space network. The Kings Park Master Plan 2014 will inform the management of the park and future improvement works and priorities.
2. INTRODUCTION

Kings Park is located in Tallarook Street, Seymour, extending along to Edward Street and Lesley Street. Kings Park is zoned Public Park and Recreation (PPRZ) and has a large Crown land section reserved for the purpose of ‘public recreation and showgrounds’.

It is one of four major parks within the built up area of the town (along with Lions Park, Chittick Park and Goulburn Park). In addition to the four major parks, there are two major publicly accessible bushland parks south of the main town area (Australian Light Horse Memorial Park and Bushland Park). Each of the six parks has a distinct character and, together with the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk, provides Seymour and the broader region with an extensive and diverse range of public open space and cultural experiences.

The original Kings Park area was a lagoon and swamp. It was gazetted as a reserve in 1903 and has been developed as a public recreation reserve since 1905.

Figure 1 Kings Park Lagoon 1917

Since development, the site has been used for regional agricultural shows and as Seymour’s premier sporting venue. Previously an agricultural society had operated on nearby land.

The park has increased in size since 1905 and in the early 1980’s, the Shire of Seymour acquired adjoining land totalling 3.62 hectares. When added to the 10.16 hectares of Crown land managed by the previous Shire of Seymour at that time, the park increased to its current 14 hectares. When local government amalgamations occurred in 1994, the park came under the new Mitchell Shire Council.
A Council appointed Committee of Management (CoM) manages the whole park except for the Community Centre (Football Netball Club) building, which is leased directly from Council and Guide Hall, which is subject to a separate occupancy agreement.

A CoM has managed the park since 1999 and, in conjunction with Council, has planned and delivered extensive improvement works at the site. The CoM’s success in managing, maintaining and improving the park reflects significant time, expertise and labour contributions made by volunteers.

Current facilities include: agricultural show pavilions, exhibition hall, two sporting ovals (one with a turf cricket table), outdoor netball court, junior playground, picnic and barbecue facilities, walking paths, some little athletics facilities, two sporting pavilions and a grandstand at the main oval, three public/patron toilet facilities, a guide hall, equestrian facilities, cricket practice nets, a CFA training track (disused) and some buildings used by community groups (playgroup, gymnasium, radio station and amateur theatre production).
The park is home to a number of sporting clubs and community groups, is used by schools and hosts a regular market. It is the venue for major agricultural shows and other events which attract many visitors and overnight stayers to Seymour.

Adjoining the current Kings Park open space is the Seymour Bowling Club (mainly on land owned by the club but on some land leased from Council) and the Seymour and District Historical Society’s building (on Crown land under a separate occupancy agreement with the state government). These sites are therefore not included under this master plan.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Kings Park Master Plan is to establish the:

i. strategic direction and guide future use and management of the park, and

ii. identify capital works priorities.

In 2007 the Kings Park CoM developed a site Master Plan, which was adopted by Council, and this has informed improvement works at the park since. The Master Plan is now seven years old and it is timely to review outstanding actions and consider new needs and overall priorities at this important community site. This 2014 Master Plan builds on the previous plan and reviews the strategic direction in the current context.

4. PREPARATION

The draft 2014 Master Plan was developed through consultation with the Kings Park Committee of Management and community groups based at the park.

The draft Master Plan was then used as the basis for broader consultation with other users, key stakeholders and the Seymour and wider Mitchell community.

The feedback was considered and has informed the final Kings Park Master Plan 2014.
5. SITE CONTEXT


Previously, Council appointed Section 86 Committees, under the Local Government Act 1979, to manage the day to day operations of some parks and reserves. These committees were Committees of Council which operated under delegation from Council. In 2011, Council supported these groups to become separately incorporated bodies and previous instruments of Section 86 delegations were replaced with Funding and Service Agreements (FASAs). The current Kings Park Committee of Management, consisting of user group and community representatives and one Mitchell Shire Councillor, is an incorporated body operating under a FASA.

The FASA provides the CoM with financial assistance from Council to manage and maintain the park. The FASA details the CoM’s powers, functions and duties which include -

- developing management policies, procedures, rules and regulation,
- making recommendations to Council on capital works projects,
- seeking prior written approval from Council for any capital works, extensions, additions or material alterations,
- resolution of any usage conflicts,
risk management and safety,
- good governance including holding proper meetings and keeping accurate records,
- maintaining a booking register and system, including conditions of use,
- undertaking maintenance,
- setting fees and charges, managing operational finances and records, and
- reporting to Council.

As a separately incorporated body, the CoM is also responsible for meeting governance and reporting requirements under the Victorian Incorporated Associations Reform Act 2012, including submitting annual financial statements to Consumer Affairs Victoria.

The CoM’s current FASA with Council commenced on 1 July 2013 for a two year period with provision for a further one year option.

The FASA’s Schedule 2 details the CoM’s and Council’s responsibilities for insurances, utility costs and facility maintenance and renewal.

6. LEGISLATIVE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING CONTEXT

Legislation particularly relevant to the management of Kings Park includes:

- Victorian Local Government Act 1979
- Victorian Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978
- Victorian Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012
- Victorian Planning and Environment Act 1987

Under the Mitchell Planning Scheme, the park is currently zoned Public Park and Recreation. A land subject to inundation overlay applies to part of the park.
Council must ensure the Crown land at Kings Park is managed in accordance with the purpose of its Crown land reservation (public recreation and showgrounds) and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries’ Committees of Management – Responsibilities and Good Practice Guidelines. These guidelines were updated in May 2014 and place significant obligations and responsibilities on Committees of Management of Crown land, ie. Council, in relation to Kings Park.

The development of a new master plan for Kings Park is aligned with the following objectives of the Council Plan 2013-2017:

- Healthy and vibrant communities – ‘Providing and supporting programs and services to build vibrant and healthy communities where people are proud to live.’
- Environmental resilience – ‘Responding the changing environmental conditions and protecting our natural environment to ensure long-term sustainability.’
- Sustainable growth and development – ‘Shaping the future of our communities through forward planning and well built and maintained facilities and infrastructure.’
- Strong reputation and economy – ‘Developing a strong regional reputation and supporting local tourism and economic development opportunities.’

In 2013, Council adopted the Mitchell Open Space Strategy 2013-2023 (MOSS) which provides the planning and development framework for the provision of open space in the Shire. Under the MOSS’s framework, the landscape setting of Kings Park is best described as open parkland. Its functions are primarily showgrounds and sport with a secondary function of social/family recreation.

More broadly, Council adopted its Integrated Community Services and Infrastructure Plan (ICSIP) in 2013. As well as planning for new communities in residential growth areas, ICSIP was developed in the context of changing needs in established areas and the challenges many councils are facing with ageing infrastructure and its capacity to meet current standards and guidelines. Opportunities to consolidate services in ‘fit for purpose’ shared or multi-use buildings are preferable in the longer term.

Based on Council’s Sports Development Plan 2011 and feedback from the Kings Park CoM, ICSIP made a number of recommendations relating to Kings Park improvement works but qualified all with ‘subject to confirmation in the Kings Park Master Plan’.
7. SERVICE PLANNING CONTEXT

The 2007 Kings Park Master Plan included an extensive list of proposed improvements over the short, medium and long term. Included amongst the highest priority items were the three most costly – upgrade of power supply, new open space including a junior size oval and upgrade of the fire track to competition standard.

Two of these higher cost actions have been completed (power supply upgrade and new oval), as have many other recommended actions.

The SDP made a number of recommendations for sporting facility improvements at Kings Park:

- Little Athletics - Provide a clubroom/meeting area at No 1 Oval (medium term estimated cost $175,000, Council and user group funding)
- Australian Rules – Upgrade player amenities and kitchen in pavilion (short term, $150,000, user group funded)
- Australian Rules – Upgrade floodlighting to competition standard (long term, $350,000, user group funded)
- Netball – Install second outdoor court, lighting and shelter (medium term, $100,000, CoM and user group funded, or upgrade indoor netball court in exhibition building)
- Equestrian – Cutting club – double size of holding pens (medium term, $35,000, user group funded); provide secure storage on site (medium term, $20,000, user group funded)
- Equestrian – Riding for the Disabled – install shelter over riders’ platform (medium term, $15K, user group funded).

The MOSS reviewed these and recommended:

Prepare a master plan for Kings Park that includes the following improvements:

a) Provision of a perimeter trail,
b) Continued consolidation of buildings that are functionally obsolete,
c) Upgrading of pavilion and floodlighting,
d) Provision of storage and increasing the size of the cattle holding pens for the One Tree Hill Cutting Club,
e) Installation of a shelter over the riders’ platform for the Riding for the Disabled,
f) Provision of a clubroom/meeting area for Seymour Little Athletics Centre, and
g) Installation of a second netball court adjacent to the existing court.
In relation to these recommendations:

- a pathway currently runs along approximately 75% of the perimeter of the park and is well-used,
- a shelter over the Riding Develops Abilities (formerly Riding for the Disabled) platform has been superseded and a storage shed constructed instead,
- there are two sporting pavilions at the main oval and the one referred to is that named Community Centre and leased to the Australian Rules football club,
- upgrading of sports floodlighting (to competition standard) is not considered a priority by the CoM nor sporting users at this time.

8. KEY ISSUES

A number of issues at the park were identified during the development of the SDP and MOSS, including:

- condition of a number of buildings and structures,
- opportunity to consolidate building-based services,
- improving the usability of some activity specific facilities by making them fit for purpose, and
- lack of services for little athletics and netball.

Other specific issues/needs which have been identified by the CoM, user groups and Council officers as part of the preparation of this Master Plan include (not in priority order) –

Service needs:
- a second netball court, provision of shelter/s and access to ancillary facilities,
- pavilion improvements,
- little athletics clubroom, throwing, jumping and storage,
- playgroup facility improvements,
- playground upgrade, and
- basic facilities to support use of second oval.

Facility condition:
- CFA training track cannot be used due to degradation,
- public toilets,
- some roads and car park areas,
- Eric Head and Fred Grimwade (agricultural event) pavilions, and
- Guide hall.

Facility management/functionality:
- balance of use of main oval – sports/events,
- usage agreements
- limited functionality and use of exhibition hall, and
- current location of cricket practice nets.
9. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

Under the MOSS’s planning and development framework, open space is classified by catchment, setting and function. Under this framework, Kings Park is best described as having a regional catchment and is in an open parkland setting. Like most rural showground sites, it has a mix of functions, but is primarily a showground and sporting venue. Establishing an agreed balance between these primary functions at sites of this nature presents some challenges and this has been the case at Kings Park.

Council's planning for and management of open space is underpinned by the following principles:

- Diversity
- Appropriateness
- Co-location and multiple use
- Access and inclusion
- Tailored delivery
- Community and stakeholder partnerships
- Protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage
- Affordability

10. MANAGEMENT & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The effect of applying the principles of the MOSS to the management and future development of Kings Park include:

10.1 Diversity

Kings Park’s distinct role within the extensive open space network in Seymour is as a showground/event and sports venue. It is a multi and high use site of regional significance and is the only showground within the Shire. It is home to a number of local and district community groups and is the venue for significant agriculturally based and other events and a regular market.
10.2 Appropriateness

Facilities at the site reflect the park’s primary functions as a regional showground/event and sports venue. It has a secondary function as a social/family recreation area. The park land and main sporting oval in particular are provided and maintained at a very high standard.

Buildings and other structures at Kings Park have been developed over many years and a number are single purpose facilities or have limited multi-use capability. This is partly the result of being a showground although historical development has resulted in two sporting pavilions and one grandstand at the main sporting oval. These sporting pavilions are however used by a number of park users and the broader community. Neither pavilion meets the needs of users satisfactorily.

Some buildings and other structures, particularly agricultural pavilions, are now obsolete or at the end of their useful life. Others are out-dated, unattractive or lacking functionality.

The lack of functionality and usage of the relatively new Exhibition Building is of particular concern.

10.3 Co-location and multi-use

Resources will be used efficiently and effectively by:

- minimising the number of building footprints on a reserve,
- integrating community active and social use of reserves, and
- encouraging shared use and multiple users in preference to providing single use facilities.

There are currently a large number of buildings on the reserve. A number have been developed to meet the needs of particular user groups at various stages of the park’s development. The construction of some has involved significant volunteer labour and community group or external funding.

Over time, a more integrated approach to building design, provision and management would be more sustainable, not only financially but socially. Opportunities to consolidate services in shared or multi-use facilities which are designed to be ‘fit for purpose’ are preferable in the longer term. Some current user groups rely on the goodwill of primary users to access basic sporting pavilion services. The Committee of Management has agreed that it would be beneficial for further planning and feasibility work to be undertaken to consider better use of building resources and meet all user needs.

Appropriate occupancy agreements would need to be in place to facilitate shared or multi-use facilities. Leases give exclusive use to the lessee, which in turn can hire the facility or parts of it to others. This occurs at one of the main oval sporting pavilions (called Community Centre) used primarily by the Seymour Football Netball Club, under an over-holding lease. The other exclusively used facility is the Guide Hall.
The Kings Park CoM, whilst responsible for use and management of the park, has limited control over these two facilities and roles and responsibilities lack clarity. Of particular concern is risk management and building maintenance, compliance and renewal obligations. It would be preferable for the management of all facilities at the park to be under the direct control of the park’s CoM. Care would need to be taken to ensure that user groups which may currently rely on income from liquor or other licences under lease or other occupancy arrangements are not materially disadvantaged.

Leases may be appropriate where a user group makes a significant financial contribution to the construction of a building and its ongoing maintenance and renewal. The type of occupancy agreement applied at any facility is however better considered under a broader Council policy regarding occupancy of and fees and charges for use of community facilities.

10.4 Access and inclusion

The CoM is required to encourage public interest and maximise involvement and participation of the community in the development, use and sharing of the park. New facilities will be designed using the principles of universal design and works will be undertaken to improve access at existing facilities and within the park more generally.

The park’s sporting focus has traditionally been on activities for participants in traditional male dominated sports such as Australian Rules and cricket, although Seymour’s netball association was based at Kings Park until it relocated to Chittick Park. The mix of use is however changing at Kings Park as a large Little Athletics club grows and AFL Victoria’s introduction of the Country Football Netball model. The facilities for Little Athletics and netball are however currently inadequate.

10.5 Tailored delivery

The regional catchment, role and functions of Kings Park have resulted in the park providing a diverse range of services. Over time, there have been significant capital works to develop and improve open space, buildings and other structures. These works have been funded by Council, the CoM, user groups and through grants from external agencies.

Kings Park is the only site in Mitchell Shire with a primary function as a showground. It is also the Shire’s premier sporting venue. Site infrastructure and services reflect this unique role in Mitchell's open space network.
10.6 Community and stakeholder partnerships

Council appoints community based CoMs to manage, operate and maintain some parks and encourage public interest and participation.

This partnership arrangement has been particularly successful at Kings Park where there is a high level of volunteer involvement and practical contribution to the park’s services. Without this high level of volunteer time, expertise and labour, it would be difficult to maintain the park to its current standards of presentation.

10.7 Protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage

The Taungurung people are the traditional custodians of the land in much of central Victoria, including in and around Seymour.

The extensive and diverse open space network in Seymour and surrounds reflects its location on the Goulburn River and the town’s post-European settlement pastoral, transport and military history. It also reflects significant community advocacy and work to preserve and enhance Seymour’s open space, river and bushland areas.

For more than a century, Kings Park has been the region’s main agricultural show venue and Seymour’s principal sporting facility.

10.8 Affordability

At a site such as Kings Park, which plays a significant regional role, it is important to ensure that local community groups are able to access facilities which are fit for their purposes and affordable to use.

Seymour has an extensive and diverse range of public open space and it will be important to ensure that services and infrastructure maintenance and renewal obligations are sustainable for ratepayers, CoMs and user groups in the longer term.

Seymour’s open space network is a competitive strength, from which social, economic and environmental benefits are generated.
11. USES

Kings Park’s facilities support a diverse range of community groups and is ‘home’ to –

- Seymour Agricultural and Pastoral Society
- Seymour Playgroup
- Riding Develops Abilities (formerly Riding for the Disabled)
- Seymour Urban Fire Brigade
- Seymour Girl Guides
- Seymour Poultry Club
- Seymour 103.9FM Radio Station
- Eastern Hill Cricket Club
- Seymour Football Netball Club
- Seymour Junior Football Netball Club
- Seymour Little Athletics Club
- St Marys Junior Football Netball Club
- Lone Tree Hill Cutting Club
- Seymour Community Gymnasium
- Seymour Performers Workshop

The park is also used by schools and is the venue for district and regional sports finals. It hosts a monthly craft and produce market and other events and activities.

Major annual events held at the park include the Seymour Show (Seymour Agricultural and Pastoral Society), Seymour Alternative Farming Expo and Sheep Dog Trials. These events attract a large number of visitors and overnight tourists to Seymour and make important contributions to Seymour’s economy.

The park’s secondary function as a social/family recreation space for Seymour residents is supported through the provision of barbecues, picnic shelters, playground, public toilets, pathways and environmental features. The park’s prominent location and facilities make the park a popular stopping place for travellers.

12. USAGE AGREEMENTS

The CoM has developed a Kings Park Recreation Reserve Policies document. It covers:

- camping,
- signs,
- memorials,
- animals in Exhibition Building,
- whole of park bookings, sports field surface usage,
- oval management and allocation,
- oval use allocation, and
- oval maintenance management plan.
The document reflects:

- the showgrounds function of the park,
- its regional significance,
- diversity of use,
- the challenges of balancing sometimes competing uses, and
- the CoM’s business-like approach to managing the park.

Because there have been some difficulties in managing the impact of major events on sports surfaces in the past, the document covers protection of the sporting ovals in detail, including:

- how ‘whole of park’ event and casual bookings will be considered in the context of the park being home to seasonal sports users,
- how sports fields will be protected from damage, particularly by events use,
- how oval allocation and decisions about usage or to close grounds will be made, and
- when maintenance and renovation will occur.

CoMs can face challenges in balancing the needs of various user groups and ensuring that there is fair access and fees and charges for use are equitable. To support CoMs, Council is currently preparing a Community Facility Occupancy Policy and a Community Facility Fees and Charges Policy. These policies will provide a framework for greater consistency for use of Council’s recreation reserves, pavilions, meeting rooms and other identified community facilities. The work will include the development of standard occupancy agreements.

In recent years, a more comprehensive maintenance and management plan, which includes over sowing rye grass in mid-March, has been introduced for the main oval. Whilst this has resulted in a very high quality playing surface for Australian Rules in particular, some users believe it has negatively impacted on their activities.

To protect sporting surfaces in inclement weather in particular, the CoM has established a grounds management committee with the power to close grounds or parts of grounds should conditions warrant. Whilst sporting groups can cancel, relocate or reschedule use, this is not usually the case for significant agricultural shows or special events.

The CoM considers feedback from all users in its ongoing review and refinement of its usage policies and practices.
13. IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES

Previous planning and more recent consultation with the Kings Park CoM and user groups, has confirmed or identified current service improvement needs, facility condition issues and facility functionality issues at Kings Park.

Based on this information and using the planning principles of the MOSS, officers have established priorities for improvements, to be used as the basis for broader community consultation on this draft Master Plan. Cost estimates, where shown, are indicative only. Prior to any project occurring further planning, detailed designs and feasibility work will be required.

Please note, items are listed in priority categories and are not identified in priority order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher priority (Years 1-4):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a second outdoor netball court, provision of shelter/s and access to ancillary facilities</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>sporting pavilion improvements, which facilitate shared/multiple use</td>
<td>costs dependent on actual uses</td>
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<td>little athletics clubroom (to be included in sporting pavilion improvement item), throwing, jumping and storage facilities</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>fire track renovation to training standard</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>agricultural pavilion decommission/renewal/consolidation</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>playgroup facility upgrade</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
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<td>basic facilities to support use of second oval</td>
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<td>public toilet renewal</td>
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<td>exhibition building upgrade</td>
<td>subject to further planning and feasibility work</td>
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<tr>
<td>road/car park/access upgrades and renewals</td>
<td>rolling program, subject to funding</td>
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<td>irrigation improvements</td>
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<td>playground upgrade</td>
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<td>cricket training net relocation and upgrade</td>
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<tr>
<td>main oval sports lighting upgrade to competition standard</td>
<td>$320,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cutting horse facility improvements</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
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14. IMPLEMENTATION

The Master Plan provides a vision for the park’s future. It is however an aspirational
document as all projects are dependent on the availability of funding from Council, the CoM,
user groups and other sources, including grants. The recommended actions do not commit
any party to funding but will better inform Council decision-making and can be used to
support external funding applications. The items have been prioritised as high, medium or
low priority. Should funding for a particular project become available, the recommended
priorities for delivery could change.

15. REVIEW

This master plan should be reviewed no later than 2024.