



## Melbourne Communiqué

From the Chairman and Congress Committee of the  
*Healthy Parks Healthy People* International Congress  
11 – 16 April 2010, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

**Imagine a new medicine that could keep you more active and healthy with reduced risk of cancer, heart disease and diabetes, that improves learning, captivates young people and delivers clean water and fresh air.**

**It would win a Nobel Prize!**

**It's not a medicine it's a park. Any visit to a quality, well maintained park can deliver these health benefits.**

**This world is within our reach. We have the natural and human resources to do it. The challenge is to reconnect people to nature.**

***Healthy Parks Healthy People***, an initiative pioneered by the State of Victoria, Australia emphasises the vital link between the health of people and the health of our planet. This is not new thinking; it is a rediscovery of our ancestors' understanding that people and their environment are intrinsically linked. Indigenous people know and continue to live by this 'connection to country': to live within and as part of nature. However, as humanity has developed, we have grown away from nature. The way we live is a risk to the sustainability of our health and the health of the planet.

### **Parks are integral to healthy people and a healthy environment**

We all know the world faces many challenges – pollution, access to clean water, global warming, population growth, plant and animal extinctions, deforestation and increasing health risks from 'modern' diseases such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes, depression and stress. The health of our environment is the key to resolving these challenges. Reconnecting people with nature can restore our resilience and help us tackle challenges and adapt to change.

The world's parks<sup>1</sup> contain the landforms, plants, animals and ecosystems that are crucial to our wellbeing. They support the health of the planet and they give us room to breathe, to connect with others, and to pursue a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

### **Human health depends on healthy ecosystems**

Healthy ecosystems produce essential resources such as fresh water, food, timber, fibre and medicines now and those yet to be discovered. They purify our water, clean our air, moderate the climate, provide carbon storage options and regulate floods. When we degrade natural habitats, we lessen the ability of our environment to support healthy life on Earth.

The protection of biodiversity afforded by parks allows scientists to secure diverse species for varied research with potentially huge benefits for medicinal advances.

<sup>1</sup> The world's parks include terrestrial and marine protected areas, conservation reserves, world heritage areas, urban parks, greenspaces and gardens.

### **Parks conserve healthy ecosystems**

Parks protect and conserve ecosystems and contribute to an environment that is diverse and complex. When we protect nature in parks, we ensure it continues to provide ecosystem services fundamental to human and environmental health. An environment rich in diversity and complexity gives us options for sustainable economic activity, the capacity to nurture human welfare, and the ability to adapt to change.

### **Contact with nature can improve human health**

Evidence shows that exposure to natural environments helps us cope with and recover from stress, illness and injury; gives us a more positive outlook and greater life satisfaction and can improve concentration and productivity. Nature-based therapies can heal patients where other treatments fail.<sup>2</sup>

These are more than just feel good outcomes. Parks and other natural environments are integral to preventing disease. Globally, 36 million premature deaths per year can be averted by action addressing chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke and diabetes. The community costs could be dramatically reduced if a small proportion of health budgets were invested in preventative programs in parks.

### **Parks contribute to economic growth and wellbeing**

Parks are an important focus for the tourism and recreation industries, which make a significant contribution to national, state and local economies. In fact, nature and culture-based tourism is the fastest growing sector in global tourism. Increasing visitor demand stimulates the development of infrastructure and industries, with flow on effects to the related goods and service. Parks cost money to manage but by generating far greater economic activity through employment, provision of services and development of infrastructure, they make greater economic contribution to society.

### **Parks contribute to cohesive, vibrant and healthy societies**

From massive wilderness parks to neighbourhood green spaces, parks provide a place for people to get away and get together. Individuals find peace in parks; families and friends congregate in parks; volunteers devote time to work in parks; conservation, recreation and natural and cultural history groups visit parks. Such activities support personal wellbeing, build social cohesion and strengthen our communities. Parks protect sites of great social, cultural and spiritual value to communities.

Parks support Indigenous people's wellbeing, livelihoods and culture. The link between Indigenous people and their environment is central to their cultural identity. Parks are a component of an indigenous landscape that benefit from this connection and knowledge when Indigenous people are engaged in park planning and management. As traditional owners, their stories about the land, its spiritual significance and natural features enrich the experience for all visitors. Traditional owners also derive economic benefit from their association with parks as owners, managers or commercial operators.

Programs in parks that recognise the special needs of specific groups – such as parents, ethnic and religious groups, physically and mentally challenged people, the elderly, youth and children – ensure the benefits of parks can be accessed by all. The alienation of youth from nature is a modern trend that must be reversed. Young people are the future custodians of parks; however technology competes for their time. Instilling appreciation of the natural and cultural values of parks and nature in young people will guarantee the future of both.

Parks provide a window to our past, they are a vital part of our physical and social infrastructure, and are integral to our health and wellbeing today and into the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Healthy Parks Healthy People – The Benefits of Contact with Nature 2008, Deakin University

In 2003, 3000 participants in the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress made the following pledge as part of the Durban Accord: ***“We pledge to share our vision that a sustainable future of humankind depends on a caring partnership with nature.”***

**THE CHAIRPERSON AND CONGRESS COMMITTEE OF THE HEALTHY PARKS HEALTHY PEOPLE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS**, Melbourne Australia 2010 believes that the development of the ***Healthy Parks Healthy People*** philosophy honours and progresses that pledge. We now seek to further that pledge by adopting the ***Healthy Parks Healthy People*** philosophy in alignment with the following principles:

1. Parks are integral to healthy people and a healthy environment
2. Human health depends on healthy ecosystems
3. Parks conserve healthy ecosystems
4. Contact with nature can improve human health
5. Parks contribute to economic growth and wellbeing
6. Parks contribute to cohesive, vibrant and healthy societies

To achieve this we:

- Call on the governments of the world
  - to recognise the association between humanity and nature and the need to nurture this connection for the benefit of humanity and the environment
  - to act immediately to secure their natural heritage in parks as an essential resource for the wellbeing of their people and future generations in perpetuity
  - ensure that indigenous peoples and traditional owners are directly engaged in the planning and management of parks in recognition of their intimate knowledge and cultural connection to the land
  - and in particular:
    - ❖ adopt the ***Healthy Parks Healthy People*** philosophy as a basis for the conservation of nature and natural resources and the integration of association with parks and nature into public health programs
    - ❖ confront the modern diseases of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stress, lung disease and cancer by incorporating access to parks as an essential preventative component of health programs
    - ❖ further research and disseminate the learning’s of the health benefits and value of human association with the natural world and develop ***Healthy Parks Healthy People*** performance measures
    - ❖ engage communities to restore links between parks and other conservation reserves on a seascape/landscape scale to enable plants and animals to move and adapt to climate change
    - ❖ promote the benefits that parks can provide to local economies through the development of appropriate nature based infrastructure and services that allow visitors to use and enjoy natural areas responsibly
    - ❖ provide opportunities for all sectors of the community to realise the benefits of use and enjoyment of parks including in urban environments
    - ❖ encourage all people to recognise their custodial role in the protection and sustainability of parks and the associated benefits to individuals and communities

- ❖ encourage the use of parks and natural areas for personal growth and development through challenging and inspirational experiences including nature based tourism.
- ❖ optimise outdoor recreational and educational use of parks by providing ease of access and opportunities that encourage exercise and other health-related activities
- Call on the United Nations and its agencies, in particular UNESCO, the United Nations Environmental Program and the World Health Organisation, to collaborate in the development of global initiatives that promote the **Healthy Parks Healthy People** benefits such as:
  - In developing countries to secure clean water and other natural resources for the benefits of society
  - In developing countries to mitigate the human impacts of climate change by the establishment of Parks
  - Establish an international taskforce to support and promote landscape-scale conservation as a climate change adaptation strategy and a nature-based health strategy.
- Call on national and international philanthropic, environmental and health organisations to adopt the interdependency of humans and nature as an underpinning philosophy for their programs, campaigns and activities.
- Call on parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity to adopt the **Healthy Parks Healthy People philosophy and principles** in to the Programme of Work on Protected Areas, in particular activities 2.1.1, 2.1.5, 2.2.2, 2.2.6, 3.1.2, 3.1.6, 3.1.9, 3.3.5 and 3.5.1 to 3.5.5 inclusive,<sup>3</sup> and encourage its adoption as an essential element of the Convention.
- Call on the International Union for Conservation of Nature to encourage the recently created World Commission on Protected Areas **Healthy Parks Healthy People** Taskforce to:
  - provide guidance to park managers and others on the relationships between human health, community wellbeing, economic prosperity and parks
  - establish alliances with government and non-government sectors to progress research and develop the links between parks, human health, society and economies and to demonstrate these benefits
  - advocate and create collaborative relationships to support management of parks for the benefit of society.

## Our Commitment

We commit to further our understanding of, and strengthen the connection between, nature and people. Our success depends on interdisciplinary collaboration and alliances. We as leaders in our field commit to work together to strive for a healthy planet and healthy humanity, and continue to promote, facilitate and advance the health and vitality of the world's parks and communities. We undertake to rethink our approach to improving human and environmental health and do all in our powers to reconnect people to nature.

We adopt the **Healthy Parks Healthy People** philosophy to protect the earth's two most important assets – nature and people.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, Programme of Work on Protected Areas: Refer to <http://www.cbd.int/protected/pow/learnmore/intro>

**Healthy Parks Healthy People** طبىعت پاك انسان سالم

Parcuri sănătoase pentru oameni sănătoși parcs en santé, gens en santé

Sunde Parker, Sunde Brugere ILOA KANSALLISPUISTOISTA

Swastha Nikunja Swastha Jivan 健康な公園，健康な人

**สวนสร้างสุข**

Hifadhi Zilizostawi na Watu Waliostawi

健康的的公园，健康的人 Parques saudáveis Pessoas saudáveis

I parker som mår bra, mår människor bra صحت مند پارکس صحت مند لوگ

Egészséges parkokat - egészséges embereknek

**Taman Sejahtera, Rakyat Sihat**

MALUSOG NA KAPALIGIRAN, MALUSOG NA MAMAMAYAN