

# Healthy Parks Healthy People

Research has shown that accessing and interacting with a healthy natural environment can have positive physical, social, mental and spiritual health of individuals enhancing productivity and encouraging a greater connection with our natural environment. In fact, over \$400 million is said to be spent on inactive Australians every year. The biggest problems are heart attack and mental illness.

The ACT's economic performance and social cohesion relies on healthy Canberrans. The Territory's environmental well-being relies on a healthy parks and open space system. Collectively, the health of people and parks are the key to the Territory's sustainability.

The **Healthy Parks Healthy People** program has two overarching messages:

- *Healthy Parks* communicates balancing the protection of our natural and cultural heritage and use of our urban and non urban open space with the needs of Canberran's and their visitors.
- *Healthy People* communicates the physical, social, spiritual and mental benefits associated with using parks as venues for recreational and environmental activities.

Simply, this is not a promotional campaign targeting people to use parks. It is a campaign that raises awareness of the fact that parks have to be attractive and healthy. Parks are the key to the longevity of the planet; they are the sanctuaries of life that people depend on. They are places where people can improve physical and mental health. The health of people is intertwined with the health of the environment. This is a mindset for the community and Parks Conservation and Lands as the parks managers. Parks and people are intertwined.

*Parks Victoria* was the first parks agency in Australia to commence and implement the **Healthy Parks Healthy People** concept. Commencing in 2000, its success warranted inviting the participation of other agencies to develop a national campaign. To date South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales and more recently the Australian Capital Territory have joined Victoria to share resources and benchmark off one another. The program is facilitated by the Parks Forum who is actively encouraging New Zealand to participate. All participants are bound by a licensing agreement detailing the brand and brand responsibilities.

There are three basic messages:

- Parks Conservation and Lands manages the ACT's parks and open space system to equally conserve biodiversity and support an enjoyable, healthy and sustainable lifestyle;
- Spending active recreation time in parks can lead to greater fitness, health and overall wellbeing;
- There are many physical, social, spiritual and mental benefits associated with using parks as venues for recreational and environmental activities.