

# **Metropolitan Parks in Melbourne: A Critical Analysis of Factors Affecting Visitation by Regional Victorians**

Thesis submitted by

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFL	Australian Football League
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology
CBD	Central Business District
CPM	Community Perception Monitor
CRC	Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre
DCFL	Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands
MMBW	Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works
NRPS	National Recreation Participation Survey
NVS	National Visitor Statistics
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives

## THESIS SUMMARY

The principal aim of this thesis was to investigate visitation to Melbourne by regional Victorians with particular emphasis on finding ways to improve visitation to metropolitan parks. This thesis incorporated two theories of leisure participation, from which a conceptual framework was developed. Crawford, Jackson and Godbey's (1991) constraints model and Raymore's (2002) facilitator's framework were used to investigate the decision making process of regional visitors to Melbourne's parks.

Earlier quantitative research by Parks Victoria indicated a decline in visitation of both regional Victorians and Melburnians to Melbourne's metropolitan parks between the years 2000 and 2003 (Community Perception Monitor (CPM), 2000 - 2003). This finding produced an opportunity to conduct research into the constraints on metropolitan park use, particularly by regional Victorians. The research was conducted using individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to gather the requisite data from both regional Victoria and Melbourne. This information was used to establish recommendations in order to raise interest in visiting Melbourne's metropolitan parks.

It was found that, as the majority of regional visitors to Melbourne planning a short-break collect their information prior to departure, park information needs to be available before they embark. Whilst visiting Melbourne, regional visitors agreed that they would utilise local knowledge produced by their host to fill any of their limited spare time.

Consequently, Melburnians should be seen as a potential prime source of information for visitors. However, this thesis found that Melburnians themselves were often unaware of local park attractions, so part of the strategy to raise interest in visiting Melbourne's parks must be targeted at Melburnians as local tourists.

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Sharyn McDonald

March 2006

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my son **Max McDonald**

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Completing this thesis would not have been possible without the support of a number of people. My husband John and son Max have shown more patience than could or should be thought possible. They have provided advice, allowed time and provided a tremendous amount of encouragement in what seemed a never ending sea of paper. Thank you!

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# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Few would argue that parks are a valuable commodity to society as a whole. However, only a small proportion of the population use parks. By utilising consumer behaviour theory this thesis sought to investigate the perceptions people have of parks in Melbourne with a particular emphasis on those managed by Parks Victoria. Incorporating the use of constraints theories, this thesis sought to gain an understanding of the limitations restricting people from utilising parks and ascertaining if there was a gap between expectations and service.

Melbourne annually attracts 80% of its short break (one to three days duration) visitors from regional Victoria (Tourism Victoria 2002). Whilst visiting Melbourne the majority of these regional visitors prioritise activities that can be associated with urban tourism, such as dining out and shopping. The most popular activity for regional Victorians making short break visits to Melbourne is visiting friends (39%) (Tourism Victoria 2002). Promotional literature for urban destinations utilises parks as an important attraction feature (Archer, 2005). Melbourne hosts a variety of parks throughout the Central Business District (CBD) and metropolitan area. Figure 1.1 highlights the distribution of Parks Victoria managed parks in Melbourne's metropolitan area.

**Figure 1.1 Melbourne's Metropolitan Parks**



Source: Parks Victoria (2002)

Parks account for more than 6,000 hectares of land in metropolitan Melbourne (refer to Appendix 1). An estimated 105.7 million visits to parks in 2002/2003 (Aius and City of Melbourne, 2005) illustrates the importance outdoor recreational spaces have as part of urban tourism in Melbourne. Parks Victoria has an asset base of over \$1 billion (Parks Victoria, 2005a) and is responsible for 226 parks including 80 parks in Melbourne, 32 classified as metropolitan parks (Parks Victoria, 2005b). Other organisations who manage parks in metropolitan Melbourne or who work in conjunction with Parks Victoria include: local councils or committees of management, Melbourne Water, Heritage Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

It was important to investigate the constraints perceived by potential visitors to parks because of the value parks have in our society. Not only do they provide aesthetic and

environmental value, but they also provide a range of opportunities for improved health and community values. A mismatch between the service delivered by park management organisations and the expectations of potential visitors can result in lower rates of visitation.

This thesis provided several recommendations for Parks Victoria to take into consideration when marketing their respective parks. Overall this thesis sought to achieve positive outcomes for Parks Victoria, regional and metropolitan visitors. Parks Victoria can increase the visitation levels to their parks and regional and metropolitan visitors can make recommendations to help improve their visitor experience.

This thesis also sought to understand the decision making process with regard to travel and activity participation for regional Victorians. Regional Victorians are defined as people located further than 50 kilometres from Melbourne including Geelong residents (Community Perception Monitor (CPM), 2003). It provides insights into leisure motivation, satisfaction, constraints and facilitators affecting participation and non-participation. With a focus on park visitation in Melbourne, this thesis addressed the importance of parks, how parks are perceived and sources of information. The importance of word-of-mouth information and influence of hosts as interpersonal facilitators has been emphasised. This research has enriched constraint and facilitator theories with the additional criterion: transport and the importance of available time. In addition it aimed to contribute to the level of importance, understanding, appreciation and awareness of the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) sector.

## **1.2 Background to the research**

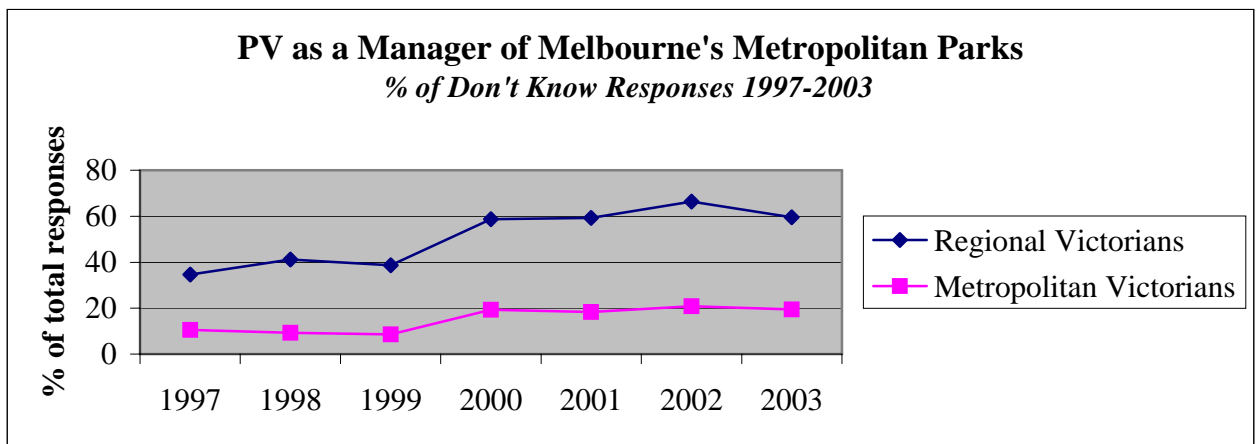
Parks Victoria *conducts an* annual telephone survey entitled '*The Community Perception Monitor*' (CPM). This survey targets approximately 1000 people, 16 years and over, from random households throughout Victoria. The data can be divided into responses from metropolitan and regional participants. Due to the detailed nature of the CPM there is sufficient detail to determine:



- The origins of visitors to Melbourne
- Age, gender, ethnicity, education and income level and family status of these visitors
- Visitation rates to metropolitan parks
- Awareness of recreational opportunities in metropolitan parks
- A list of perceived visitation constraints.

The CPM data records visitation for the three months preceding the survey. Reviewing their CPM in the year 2000, Parks Victoria noted an increase in ‘*don’t know*’ responses when regional respondents were asked to rate Parks Victoria as managers of metropolitan parks (refer to Figure 1.2). Parks Victoria was concerned that this potentially represented a decline in the visitation rates.

**Figure 1.2: Percentage of ‘don’t know’ responses involving rating Parks Victoria as a manager of Melbourne’s metropolitan parks**



Source: CPM 1997-2003.

Unfortunately there are no available data for actual regional visitation to metropolitan parks for the period between 1997 and 2001. Consequently it cannot be ascertained whether this increase in ‘*don’t know*’ responses is related to a reduced visitation of metropolitan parks or not. More recent data seem to indicate a small decline in park visitation. Between 2002 and 2003, there was a 15% decline in actual visitation to

metropolitan parks by metropolitan visitors (CPM, 2002; 2003) (Table 1.1). In this period, however, the decline is attributed to metropolitan (Table 1.1), rather than regional-Victorians. It should be borne in mind that two years of data should not be used to signify a trend. This produced an opportunity to conduct research into the constraints on metropolitan park use, particularly by regional Victorians.

**Table 1.1 Visitation to Melbourne by regional and metropolitan Victorians**

	<b>Regional Victorians</b>		<b>Metropolitan Victorians</b>	
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>
Metropolitan Parks	12%	13%	57%	42%

Source: Adapted from CPM (2002); CPM (2003)

The CPM formulated nine pre-determined responses that indicated possible constraints for potential park visitors.

These nine responses were:

- 1) Lack of interest/don't care;
- 2) Disability;
- 3) Don't have the time;
- 4) Too far away;
- 5) Don't know where they are;
- 6) Don't have the transport;
- 7) Don't feel safe;
- 8) Can not afford it/money;
- 9) Other.

Source: CPM (2003)

In 2003, the CPM results highlighted the top five constraints to park visitation by regional Victorians and Melburnians (Table 1.2).

**Table 1.2 Top Five Constraints to Park Visitation by Victorians**

Metropolitan Victorians (N=668)

<i>Don't have the time / too busy</i>	<i>Too far away / distance</i>	<i>Lack of interest / don't care</i>	<i>Don't have transport</i>	<i>Weather</i>
<b>41%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>

Regional Victorians (N=334)

<i>Too far away / distance</i>	<i>Don't have the time / too busy</i>	<i>Can't afford it / money</i>	<i>Don't have transport</i>	<i>Lack of interest / don't care</i>
<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>5%</b>

Source: Adapted from CPM (2003)

When collectively ranked the constraints were as follows:

- 1) Don't have the time, 36%
- 2) Too far away / distance, 15%
- 3) Lack of interest/don't care, 7%
- 4) Don't have the transport, 6%
- 5) Weather, 4%
- 6) Can't afford it / money. 2%

Source: Adapted from CPM (2003)

Two sets of data were utilised in this thesis, the CPM and the National Visitor Survey (NVS). The NVS data was conducted between 1999 and 2003. As part of this data collection, the NVS surveys 80,000 respondents annually. A summary of this was used to validate statistics on destinations and activity choice.

Day trip activity had shown little change by 2001. However, by 2002, some Australian cities displayed negative trends (Table 1.3). The NVS data for 2002 shows regional

visitation to Melbourne has increased slightly while other cities (with the exception of Adelaide) have shown a decline.

**Table 1.3 Visitation of Regional Tourists to Their Own State Capital**

<b>Regional visitors to their own Capital city</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>Trend</b>
Sydney	28%	26%	-
Melbourne	28%	31%	+
Brisbane	23%	20%	-
Adelaide	38%	39%	+
Perth	50%	47%	-

Visitation statistics to Darwin and Hobart only available for 2002

Source: Adapted from NVS (2001), NVS (2002)

Upon reviewing the CPM and NVS data the decline in visitation would appear to be primarily in the number of activities regional Victorians participate in whilst in Melbourne. This exploratory study investigates why such a decline might have occurred.

### **1.2.1 Literature Search**

The literature used to support this thesis included consumer behaviour theories and constraints theories. Consumer behaviour theories provide insights into the decision making process towards destination image and activity choice. The decision making process also provides an intrinsic link into the roles that positive and negative influences have on activity participation.

Several studies consider constraints and their impact on leisure participation (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991, Samdahl and Jekubovich, 1997, Jackson, 2000, Raymore, 2002,). *Constraints* are defined as “factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived

or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure” (Jackson, 1997:461 cited in Raymore, 2002:38). The hierarchical theory proposed by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) was considered the most appropriate for this thesis because this study aimed to identify constraining factors limiting park use. The constraints presented in the hierarchical theory correspond with those presented in CPM data. The literature revealed the interrelationships among constraints and the process an individual negotiates before choosing to engage in a leisure pursuit.

The literature also revealed Raymore’s (2002) use of the hierarchical theory which considered the role played by facilitators in leisure participation decisions. This thesis investigates the decision making process and considers intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints and facilitators (Raymore, 2002), recognising that all are closely interrelated. *Facilitators* to leisure are defined as factors that are “perceived or experienced by individuals to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation” (Raymore, 2002:39). Facilitators can be people as information providers or motivational drivers. Physical surroundings including the proximity of a park can also be viewed as a facilitator. Jackson (2000) suggests past studies have neglected interpersonal influences, this research aimed to address this gap.

### **1.3 Key Terms Used in this Thesis**

*Constraints* are defined as “factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure” (Jackson, 1997:461 cited in Raymore, 2002:38).

*Intrapersonal constraints* are the influences on leisure activity choice. A person is influenced by their personality or self esteem when choosing to participate in a leisure activity. Such influences include stress, anxiety, religion and prior socialisation into a leisure activity (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991; Samdahl and Jekubovich, 1997).

*Interpersonal constraints* “are the result of interpersonal interaction or the relationship between individuals’ characteristics” (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991:312).

*Structural constraints* are classified as “intervening factors between leisure preference and participation” (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991:311) such as family life-cycle stage, socio-economic status, weather and transport limitations.

*Facilitators* to leisure are defined as factors that are “perceived or experienced by individuals to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation” (Raymore, 2002:39).

*Intrapersonal facilitators* are “those individual characteristics, traits and beliefs that enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and that encourage or enhance participation in leisure” (Raymore, 2002:42/3).

*Interpersonal facilitators* are defined as “those individuals or groups that enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and encourage or enhance participation in leisure” (Raymore, 2002:43).

*Structural facilitators* are “those social and physical institutions, organizations, or belief systems of a society that operate external to the individual to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and encourage or enhance participation in leisure” (Raymore, 2002:43).

*Tourists* are “temporary visitors, staying at least twenty-four hours in the country visited, the purpose of whose journey can be classified as relating to leisure (i.e. recreation, on holiday, or for reasons associated with health, study, religion, or sport), for business or for family reasons, on a mission, or for a meeting” (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2002f).

*“Domestic tourist* is similarly defined as any person journeying in Australia and absent from his usual place of residence for twenty-four hours or longer; a distinction is made between interstate tourists (staying at least twenty-four hours in another State) and intrastate tourists. This definition of ‘tourist’ and ‘visitor’ is wider than the common interpretation of ‘tourist’ as a person travelling for pleasure or recreation” (ABS 2002f).

*Metropolitan participants/visitors* are classified as people living within a 50 kilometre radius from Melbourne central business district including Mornington residents (CPM, 2003).

*Regional participants/visitors* are classified as visitors travelling further than 50 kilometres from Melbourne including Geelong residents (CPM, 2003).

*Short break* refers to a trip taken within Australia for duration of one to three days (Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2003a, Law, 2002).

*Moderator* refers to the person leading and arbitrating the discussion in the focus groups.

*Host* refers to the person/people who accommodate or entertain guests.

## **1.4 Justification for the Research**

A key performance measurement for park managers is increased visitation to parks (Parks Victoria, 2004a). Archer and Wearing (2002:31) state “the general reduction in public funding has pressured park management agencies to seek alternative sources of revenue, and has led to a situation where visitor numbers are now a central component of agency performance”. With numbers of park visitors a crucial indicator for Parks Victoria, a decline in park visitor numbers between 2000 and 2003 raised concern. Simultaneously, park visitors expressed uncertainty about the management of Melbourne’s parks in an annual survey conducted by Parks Victoria. Parks Victoria wished to establish the link between the responses obtained by their survey and the decline in visitor numbers.

The purpose of this research was to examine what facilitators and constraints exist for regional Victorians with respect to using metropolitan parks while they are visiting Melbourne as a short stay tourism destination. The CPM provided a firm foundation on which to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the decision to travel and the activities in which regional Victorians participate, once at their Melbourne destinations. Although considerable research has been conducted in the area of recreational constraints, it is contended in this thesis that there is a need for a greater understanding of the facilitators to participation. It is important to identify where people, as facilitators, obtain information, what destinations and activities they are most likely to suggest and the level of influence they exert on the decision making process. VFR is a motive for travel and an important activity however there was limited information about hosts and their level of influence.

This thesis sought to identify the awareness levels that both regional and metropolitan people had of the park visitation opportunities that exist in Melbourne and its suburbs. Although there was available information on park opportunities, research into where people obtained information was necessary. Overall, the practical purpose of this thesis was to investigate constraints to park visitation and determine a set of strategies to improve park visitation in Melbourne. In addition, a qualitative approach was needed to investigate constraint variables to allow a greater depth of understanding of the variable relationships.



## **1.5 Research Problem**

*There is a decline in the numbers of visitors to Melbourne's metropolitan parks as shown by Parks Victoria research in the period 2000 to 2003.*

### **1.5.1 Research Questions**

The research problem can be investigated by seeking answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the attractiveness of Melbourne as a short break destination for regional Victorians?
- 2) What are the perceived constraints to metropolitan park visitation by regional and metropolitan visitors?
- 3) What awareness do people have of Melbourne's parks? and;
- 4) How can Parks Victoria attract more visitors to their metropolitan parks?

## **1.6 Summary of Research Design**

The research process for this thesis began by utilising information from the pre-existing CPM database of Parks Victoria and the NVS data provided by Tourism Victoria. This information was utilised to identify the sample and develop themes and questions. Based on an extensive literature review, a qualitative approach was chosen as the most appropriate to discover underlying reasons behind the decision to travel and participate in activities. The sample was divided into regional and metropolitan Victorians. Focus groups were organised in both regional locations and metropolitan locations. In-depth interviews were conducted with metropolitan participants. Chapter 3 describes the research process in more depth.

## **1.7 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured in five sections. The second part, chapter 2 provides a literature review. Key motivators and constraints on tourism visits are identified, with a special reference to parks. The literature review revealed past research relating to: 1) Travel Motivation, 2) Destination Choice Models, 3) Images of Destinations and 4) Market Segmentation. Using concepts and models derived from authors who have studied constraints and facilitators to leisure participation, a detailed discussion about structural constraints was presented.

In **Chapter three**, the research design was outlined to address the research questions.

**Chapter four** presented a discussion of the results obtained from both regional and metropolitan perspectives.

**Chapter five** related the findings of the research to the theory investigated. This chapter concluded with recommendations for Parks Victoria to improve visitation to metropolitan parks and made suggestions for future studies.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis. A decline in park visitation produced a need to investigate metropolitan park use and awareness. The research problem has been identified with resultant research questions. Using constraint and facilitator theories together with consumer behaviour theories, a theoretical framework was proposed. A qualitative approach utilising focus groups and in-depth interviews was summarised. The thesis proceeds with a detailed literature review of consumer behaviour, marketing of parks and constraints and facilitators to activity participation. Subsequent chapters highlight the methodology used, the presentation, analysis and discussion of results and indicate conclusions, recommendations and implications for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a theoretical framework that seeks to explain participation in park visitation. It is structured into 1) Travel motivation, destination choices and imagery, 2) Market segments and marketing plans, and 3) Decision making processes including constraints and facilitators. In order to investigate activity preference once a tourist arrives at their destination, it is important to understand the initial decision making process to travel. This literature review considered consumer behaviour in a tourism context but it is acknowledged that this is only one aspect of consumer behaviour. It aims to identify the range of variables associated with parks as a leisure pursuit and the relationship between such variables.

#### **2.1.1 Travel Motivation**

When making the decision to travel, there are a variety of motives driving this decision. Mayo and Jarvis (1981:19) describe motives as “internal energizing forces that direct a person’s behavior toward the achievement of personal goals”. Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) divide tourism motivators into ‘emotional’, ‘personal’, ‘status’, ‘cultural’, ‘physical’ and ‘personal development’. In making the decision to travel, travellers are likely to be influenced by more than one motivating factor (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999) which will change over time depending on individual needs. Lee, O’Leary, Hee Lee and Morrison (2002), in an evaluation of motivation and satisfaction dimensions, concluded that the desire to seek recreational experiences is greater than the desire to escape. These motivational factors are also described as ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors.

Dann (1977:186) wrote: ““Pull” factors are those which attract the tourist to a given resort (e.g. sunshine, sea, etc.) and whose value is seen to reside in the object of travel. “Push” factors, on the other hand, refer to the tourist as subject

and deal with those factors predisposing him to travel (e.g. escape, nostalgia, etc.)”.

‘Push’ factors are described by Lee et al. (2002) as internal, personal, individual experiences that motivate a potential traveller. Krippendorf (1999:43) points out that there is a common thread through studies revealing that “travel is motivated by ‘going away from’ rather than ‘going towards’ something or somebody” and that tourists wish to fulfil self-oriented needs. Therefore ‘push’ factors may be considered more significant in the decision to travel.

Plog (1974) proposed that travel motivation was influenced by personality types. Mayo and Jarvis (1981:19) discuss the role personality has on traveller decisions and define personality as “the patterns of behavior displayed by an individual, and to the mental structures that relate experience and behavior in an orderly way”. According to Plog’s (1974) personality descriptions ‘psychocentrics’ prefer familiar, low activity destinations that can be reached by car. At the other end of the spectrum ‘allocentrics’ prefer higher activity levels and “enjoy sense of discovery and delight in new experiences” (Plog 1974:57). The variety found in parks could appeal to both personality types. Marketers must consider the importance of ‘personalities’ when considering packaging, positioning and destination development. Some criticisms of assessing individual personalities are that some people may fit into more than one type of category or their situation may change depending on the product or situation. Cultural differences can affect the way marketers may select their imagery. They may assume a different perception, understanding or expectation from the promoted image.

Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) consider the complexity of the decision to travel and add other considerations such as the ‘considerable emotional significance’ and being ‘strongly influenced by other people’. For example, emotional significance may be a prime reason for travel to Melbourne, particularly when visiting friends or relatives. Influence of others may arise from a variety of sources including family, work colleagues, friends or information/travel professionals.

When considering the motivation to travel, a combination of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors will influence a person’s decision. ‘Push’ and ‘pull’ factors can be linked with the personality type and the emotional significance a person places on the desire to travel.

### **2.1.2 Destination Choice Models**

Tourists face a variety of choices and high levels of competition for their attention. There are also a variety of destination and activity choices. When considering the notion that the desire to see friends and relatives are prime motivational reasons to travel, the influence of these people in the decision making process should be considered. Mayo and Jarvis (1981:20) state that researchers need to “analyze the effects of others upon an individual traveler’s behavior”. They developed a model of social influences which takes account of the ‘role and family influences’, ‘reference groups’, ‘social classes’ and ‘culture and subculture’.

Um and Crompton (1999) argue that a tourist goes through three stages to reach their final decision: 1). Development of an awareness set, 2). Late consideration set, and 3). Final destination selected. An awareness set comprises of a set of destinations that a tourist considers as possible destinations (Um and Crompton, 1999).

If potential travellers consider Melbourne as a competitive destination in an ‘awareness set’, (Um and Crompton, 1999), then destinations with similar functions will need to be investigated by destination marketers for competitive advantage. Another important consideration is the external information that is contributing to the decision to travel. Such information includes: previous experience, imagery provided by promotions and media, and word-of-mouth sources (Um and Crompton, 1999).

This is supported by Baloglu and McCleary’s (1999) model on destination image, which considers the information source and previous experience as important decision making factors. Baloglu and McCleary (1999:870) suggest that the image concept “has generally been considered an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual’s mental

representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and global impression about an object or destination”. Similar to Um and Crompton’s model is that by Woodside and Lysonski (1989). Their model identifies more variables that contribute to the travellers consideration set:

- traveller variables,
- affective associations,
- intentions to visit, and
- situational variables

This model allows for the past experience and feelings linked with a destination to influence a travellers decision.

The sequential decision-flow framework as proposed by Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000) is that destination choice, timing, transport, budget and accommodation are the core decisions; secondary decisions include planning daily activities to participate in and attractions to visit; finally en-route decisions are made, for example, rest and shopping stops. As activity selection can have a bearing on destination choice, this heightens the importance of activity choice before a traveller departs.

With the abundant choices consumers have before them, destinations need to consider their competitive advantage. Destination marketing opportunities are present pre-departure, en-route and once at a location, therefore consideration should be given to availability of information. Word-of-mouth information and past experience are important when compiling destination choices. Therefore, the quality of the experience will formulate a positive destination image.

### **2.1.3 Images of Destinations**

Several authors discuss the need for potential travellers to adopt an information processing behaviour allowing them to make informed choices about the aspects to include in their itinerary (Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Moutinho, 1987).

Echtner and Ritchie (1991:2) highlight “that those destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be considered and chosen in the travel decision process”. According to Echtner and Ritchie (1991) image is composed of: attributes, imagery, functional and psychological characteristics, common and unique features. These components of destination image are presented as a continuum.” On one extreme of the continuum, the image of a destination can be composed of the impressions of a core group of traits on which all destinations are commonly rated and compared” (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991:7). Such common characteristics can be measurable (functional characteristics) such as good weather and scenery or intangible (psychological characteristics) such as friendliness, safety and atmosphere. “On the other end of the continuum, images of destinations can include unique features and events (functional characteristics) or auras (psychological characteristics)” (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991:7).

Parks Victoria may need to consider how their parks feature within the continuum. Those parks containing an element of uniqueness can be marketed using this strength. Those parks featuring good lists of common attributes can promote those functional and psychological characteristics expected by potential park visitors. Pearce et al. (1998) discusses use of icons and key symbols to promote lesser known tourist destinations. This is based on the notion “that there is a strong visual component in the concept of destination image” (Pearce et al., 1998:86). When relying on ‘symbolic stimuli’ (Pearce et al., 1998), parks must adopt an effective marketing strategy providing an appropriate image.

A destination that is able to fulfil activity needs may have a competitive advantage. The desire to satisfy an activity need provides an important connection between travellers and destinations (Moscardo, Pearce, Morrison, Green and O’Leary, 2000). Pearce et al. (1998:89) considers destination choice to be largely influenced or motivated by activities at a destination: “Motives can be seen as providing travellers with expectations for activities, and destinations can be seen as offering activities”. It is therefore important that a destination marketer has an understanding of activity preference among specific market sectors.

A study by Crofts and Reid (1993, cited in Crofts, 1999) in which Florida visitors were asked about their recreational activities, showed that 71.5% had decided upon which activities to participate in before they left home. Of the remaining 28.5%, approximately 25% made activity choices once at the destination. Prior to the study by Crofts and Reid, the promotional budget had been divided as 83% prior to departure strategies, 12% en route promotion and only 5% targeting visitors at the destination. Given that this thesis is investigating the short break travel market, it is worth considering the variations in pre-planning. A person planning an annual vacation is likely to collect more information than for a short break (Crofts, 1999).

Parks can be considered part of the attraction mix within 'urban tourism'. Archer (2005) makes the observation that park management and tourism promotion need to be linked in order for urban parks to demonstrate their potential in the attraction mix. Although it could be argued there is a blurred distinction between purposeful urban visits and tourism, Law (2002) has called for more empirical research into the decision making process of visitors to urban destinations, their use of time and the experiences they have once at the destination. In Archer's (2005) evaluation of destination choice, parks are not perceived as a priority or motivator in the decision-making criteria, yet park imagery features in most promotional material of urban destinations.

One potential problem marketers of parks face is the 'limited' and 'habitual' decision makers (Crofts, 1999) who regularly visit Melbourne, who may be less willing to factor in alternative activities. This may be a 'habitual' or an awareness issue. Of those who reside closer to the attraction/destination, their images are clear and complete. Destination image can be distorted if further away from the origin of the potential traveller. The perception, attitude or awareness of a setting will vary according to whether a person is a visitor or a local. Affection towards a place or setting can be linked to familiarity and awareness as a form of 'Topophilia'. Tuan (1974:4) defines 'Topophilia' as "the affective bond between people and place or setting". This may alter the level of detail required by tourists depending on their origin.



#### **2.1.4 Market Segmentation**

Market segmentation as defined by Lawson, Thyne, Young and Juric (1999) is “the process of partitioning the heterogenous market into segments based on important characteristics. The goal is to facilitate development of unique marketing programs that will be most effective for these specific segments” (Lawson et al. 1999:476).

When devising a marketing plan marketers may select a campaign that targets all market segments. There are alternatives to mass marketing on a state or national level. One overt trend is the dissolution of mass culture, with leisure being defined within smaller and smaller subgroups of people. This requires attention to the varying needs of different subgroups of people (Nickerson and Black, 2000).

##### *Marketing of Parks*

Effective, focused programs can be directed toward subgroups of people with detailed information on parks meeting their specific needs (Spotts and Stynes, 1984). Several authors highlight the need to improve the public’s awareness of the opportunities available in parks. Bickerstaff (1988) further develops the need for improved information due to the transient nature of people and the dynamics of leisure. Paradise and Prosser (1987) discuss a need for an improved information system so visitors can select which activity or park will best suit their needs. They suggest that diminished satisfaction is due to the gap between perceived settings and experiences and actual settings and experiences.

Wearing and Archer (2001) suggest that marketing to the mass market may be inappropriate and that a more targeted approach should be adopted so as not to compromise environmental integrity. However, it can be argued that mass media can help raise awareness of the existing but perhaps underused physical environment. This is supported by Karen Donato, coordinator of the US National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)'s Obesity Education Initiative, who suggests “that many communities

already have venues that are conducive to physical activity”, however “many people aren't even aware of what might be available locally”(Larkin, 2003:1047). Kievet (2001) supports the notion that people need to be encouraged to see the available and often easy options there before them that will enhance their well-being.

Mass marketing campaigns that can promote use of parks to improve a person's health have been in practice for several years. The 'Life Be in it' campaign in the 1970's was an example of the Federal government encouraging people to make more use of the outdoors for leisure purposes. The current social marketing campaign, '*Healthy Parks, Healthy People*' seeks to reach the wider community. '*Healthy Parks, Healthy People*' was developed by Parks Victoria with the ideology that “environmental health of parks results in a healthy community and that spending active recreation time in a well cared-for park environment can lead to greater health and fitness of both individuals and society” (Kievet, 2001:19). The 'Healthy Parks Healthy People' utilised press and radio reaching 85% and 60% respectively of Victorians aged 14 years of age or over.

In considering parks as a marketable commodity and part of the tourism product, Parks Victoria marketing plans need to consider parks as a diverse product, with the need to promote social value, whilst satisfying both the client's needs and the organisations objectives. In order to expand the demand for park services, parks must focus on *social marketing*. Wearing and Archer (2001:35) state that “Social marketing strategies attempt to influence the behaviour of target markets through the application of marketing ideas and principles that promote a social cause, and activities that have outcomes beyond simply the satisfaction of individual desires”. Parks as a venue for health promotion initiatives is just one social avenue that can be explored in more depth in future studies.

Archer and Wearing (2002) argue that park management agencies in the past have relied on the need for a natural science background of their employees and therefore have been underrepresented in marketing expertise. This has left them marketing deficient in their corporate planning. “Mindful of their increased accountability and obligations to meet performance criteria”, park management agencies have adopted a market- driven,

strategic approach to developing recreational opportunities in parks and have recognised the importance of strategic partnerships with other stakeholders which include the local communities (Archer and Wearing, 2002:34).

Park agencies are often constrained by limited resources therefore marketing through use of “strategic collaborative partnerships can provide a cost- effective means of implementing sustainable marketing strategies (Wearing and Archer, 2001:40). Parks are settings for a number of commercial operations who are actively marketing their service. There are also various government and non-government organisations that would benefit by adopting a coordinated, strategic approach with Parks Victoria. A coordinated approach could help park management agencies increase park visitation.

Sources of external information can be categorised under five categories;

- 1) personal (word-of-mouth),
- 2) marketer-dominated (advertisements),
- 3) neutral (travel agents and information guides),
- 4) experiential sources (pre-purchase visits), and
- 5) the Internet.

Crotts (1999).

Word-of-mouth is considered the most influential source of information with marketer-dominated sources of information having the least direct influence on consumer decision making (Crotts, 1999). Potential travellers or their ‘personal’ information providers may not have enough knowledge to recall; therefore they need to seek alternative external sources. As a result, a combined marketing plan would need to recognise the merits of all sources of information and thereby steer the marketing messages in a positive direction.

## **2.2 Constraints and Facilitators to Activity Participation**

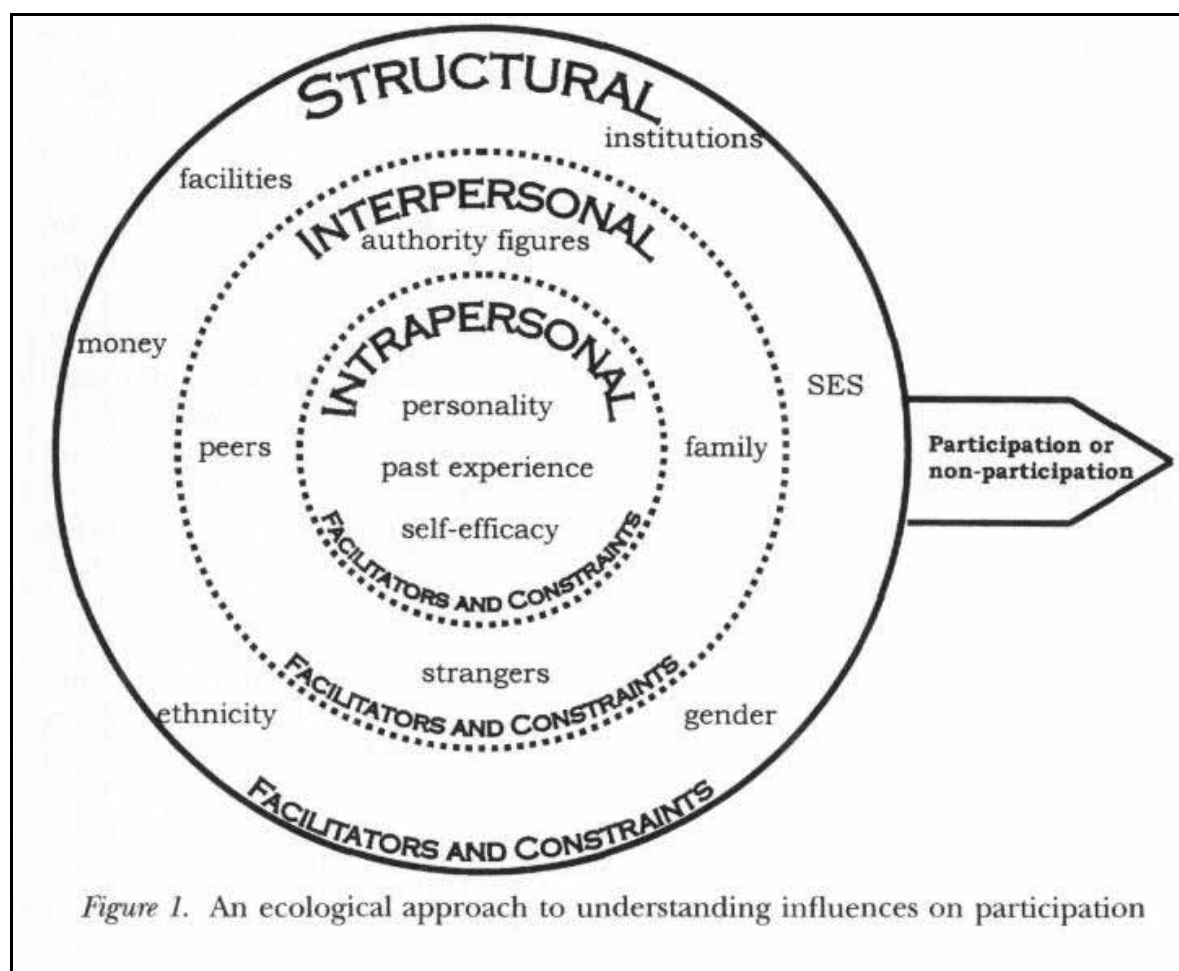
Whilst this literature review has sought to connect the various elements of tourist behaviour, leisure participation theories also need to be considered. In consideration of a variety of studies on activity participation, those by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) and Raymore (2002) are the most pertinent to this thesis.

Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) propose that there are three types of barriers to leisure participation, intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints. These barriers are incorporated into a hierarchical model of importance. This model suggests people develop leisure preferences by negotiating hierarchical barriers one stage at a time. A leisure preference is formed and providing there are no intrapersonal constraints, or if these are resolved, a person will proceed to encounter interpersonal constraints, followed by the negotiation of structural constraints. The model implies that decisions are made in a sequential series, where a person confronts and negotiates each barrier before progressing to the next stage. They also propose that “social class may have a more powerful influence on leisure participation and nonparticipation than is currently accepted, that is, the experience of constraints is related to a hierarchy of social privilege” (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991:317).

Raymore (2002) argues that the hierarchical model proposed by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) cannot be considered in isolation. Raymore proposes “that the absence of constraints does not necessarily facilitate participation” (2002:37). Raymore (2002) considers the need for a framework which also encompasses facilitators to leisure. She argues that constraint models, in the recent past, assumed that non-participation is a result of an unresolved constraint. If utilising Raymore’s framework, a person may experience an intrapersonal constraint inhibiting their participation. However, if there is a person for example, encouraging participation in an activity, they can be regarded as an interpersonal facilitator.

Figure 2.1 displays Raymore's (2002) facilitators' framework. This framework combines the hierarchy of constraints proposed by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) and integrates facilitators to leisure participation.

**Figure 2.1 Constraints and Facilitators Influencing Participation**



Source: Raymore (2002:43)

### 2.2.1 Intrapersonal

Intrapersonal variables are the influences on leisure activity choice. A person is influenced by their personality, past experience or self esteem when choosing to participate in a leisure activity (Figure 2.1). An *Intrapersonal constraint* can include stress, anxiety, religion, subjective evaluations of appropriateness or availability of

activities and prior socialisation into a leisure activity (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991; Samdahl and Jekubovich, 1997). An *Intrapersonal facilitator* enables or promotes the formation of leisure preferences, encouraging or enhancing participation in leisure (Raymore, 2002).

Differing personality types will help determine activity choice. Reference has been made to personalities and travel motivation (section 2.1.1). Extraverts take part in more social and physical leisure activities and are more likely to excel in sport, be more adventurous and take more risks than do introverts (Raymore, 2002). Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) propose that people will develop their leisure preferences once they have confronted a personal constraint. Such constraints might include gender (section 2.3.7) or age (section 2.3.1). A forty year old person, for example, may feel they 'ought not' play on park playground equipment or a female may feel gender biased therefore preventing herself from joining a male dominated sport.

Intrapersonal constraint negotiation is perceived to be the most powerful for it propels the person to have the will to act. If a person cannot overcome their inner doubt, can not identify their desire for a particular leisure preference or in fact have the ability to participate, they can not advance to the next level of constraint negotiation. On the other hand if there was an interpersonal facilitator as proposed by Raymore (2002) they can be helped to overcome the self doubt thereby encouraged to participate.

### **2.2.2 Interpersonal**

Interpersonal experiences occur or exist between individuals. Such individuals may include family members who influence a decision to participate or not, discussed further in section 2.4.1. Peer groups may cause doubt or provide encouragement, discussed further in 'Age', section 2.3.2. As shown in Figure 2.1, *Interpersonal* can be divided into constraints and facilitators. *Interpersonal Constraints* "are the result of interpersonal interaction or the relationship between individuals' characteristics" (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991:312). A person may experience interpersonal barriers if their decisions

are affected by the preference of their spouse. An interpersonal barrier may be a lack of a suitable partner to participate in activities. *Interpersonal facilitators* are defined as “those individuals or groups that enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and encourage or enhance participation in leisure” (Raymore, 2002:43).

### **2.2.3 Structural**

*Structural constraints* are classified as “intervening factors between leisure preference and participation” (Crawford and Godbey, 1987:124) such as “family life-cycle stage, family financial resources, season, climate, the scheduling of work time, availability of opportunity (and knowledge of such availability), and reference group attitudes concerning the appropriateness of certain activities”.

Raymore (2002:43) expands on structural constraints with the inclusion of *structural facilitators* which are defined as “those social and physical institutions, organizations, or belief systems of a society that operate external to the individual to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and encourage or enhance participation in leisure”.

Many variables cross between the defined boundaries. ‘Awareness’ for example could be included as an interpersonal facilitator but may be equally represented as a structural constraint or an intrapersonal variable.

Jackson (2000:64) states that “the experience of constraints varies among individuals and groups: no subgroup of the population is entirely free from constraints and each group is characterized not only by varying intensities of the experience of each type of constraint, but also by a unique combination of constraints.”

The literature aimed to identify the main constraints and how these affect various groups.

## **2.3 Constraints and Facilitators**

The literature adopts a detailed investigation of the main constraints and facilitators to activity participation with particular reference to metropolitan parks. These 13 constraints and facilitators intervene and/or enhance activity preference and participation, and include:

- Age and Life Stage,
- The Influence of Family and Friends,
- Awareness
- Available Time,
- Distance,
- Alternative Leisure Activities,
- Gender Differences,
- Transport,
- Socio-economic Considerations,
- Pricing of Leisure,
- Seasonality and Climate, and
- Physical Accessibility/Disability, and
- Race and Ethnicity.

### **2.3.1 Age and Life Stage**

*Age and Life Stage* can be considered intrapersonal constraints since certain personalities adopt socially acceptable behaviours in order to ‘fit in’. As shown in Figure 2.1, a person uses their past experience to either participate or exclude themselves from an activity.

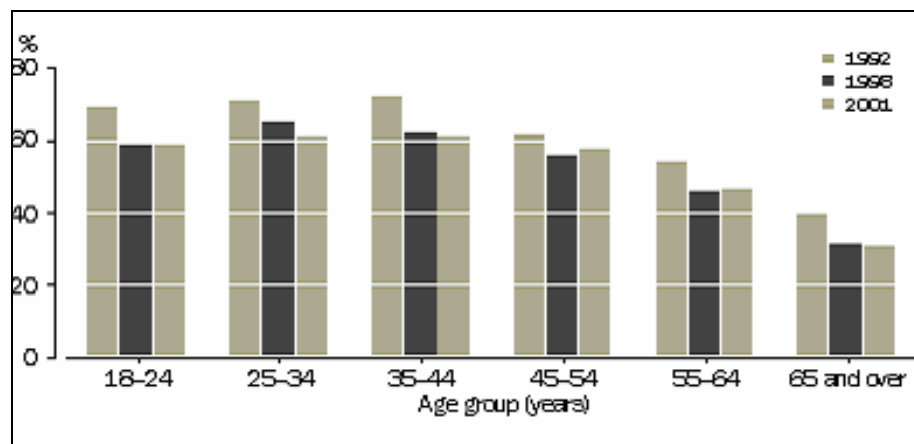
As a person ages, they develop more life experience to draw from. Raymore (2002:47) has identified this intrapersonal characteristic as ‘peer conformity’. Such people may simply be introverted (Raymore 2002) or they may simply be of an age where they need



to overcome a frame of mind before they can proceed. One such example could be a child's fear of a swing. Age may help to overcome this self doubt.

A person without a partner may forfeit activities that require companionship (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey 1991). Age and the physical ability to participate in park based recreation will affect the demographic utilising natural areas. An ABS survey conducted in 2001 showed that people between the ages of 25 and 44 years were the group most likely to have visited parks in the twelve months prior to the study. However, as shown in Figure 2.2, visitation to parks declined between 1992 and 2001 within each age group (ABS, 2005).

**Figure 2.2 Visits to World Heritage Areas, National and State Parks in Australia**



Source: ABS (2005)

Inability to visit a World Heritage area, national or state park because of age or health was the second highest reason (17%) recorded by a national study in 2001 (refer to Appendix 2) (ABS, 2005)).

Life stage and the changes that occur for example, moving from single and childless to elderly and partnerless, are important variables in leisure and travel decision making processes (Decrop, 1999b). Life stage affects not only the decision to travel but the types

of recreational choices suitable at a destination. Constraints to leisure participation such as visitation to parks can be considered temporal depending on the life stage a person is at. Hinch and Jackson (2000:94) state that “various categories of constraints exhibit systematic and consistent patterns of change over the life cycle”.

The capabilities or ability a person has, will act as a constraint or facilitator on an intrapersonal level. There is no age group or stage in the life cycle that is free from constraints and each sub group has a unique combination of constraints at varying intensities (Jackson, 2000). When a person interacts with others in order to make a decision, then their age or life stage takes the role of an interpersonal facilitator or constraint.

#### *Youth (17 years and younger)*

It has been implied that children should be introduced to park recreation whilst young (Reid, 1980). If a child is introduced to a form of recreation there is a greater chance they will continue to enjoy this activity into adulthood. Zimmer, Brayley and Searle (1995:9) relate this to ‘continuity theory’ whereby seniors find difficulty in changing individual travel patterns “because these patterns may have been established at an early stage of adult development as life-styles evolved based on place of residence, education, and attitude toward recreation” and they suggest “the largest potential impact on travel behavior comes at a relatively early age”. This is supported by Colton (1987) who found a relationship between the interaction children receive through family socialization and outdoor recreation participation. For example, camping whilst young can result in adults continuing to be campers. In a discussion of infrequent users of national parks, Griffin, Wearing and Archer (2004) discuss a lack of exposure to parks as children as a reason for lack of interest as adults. Parents can provide their children with leisure opportunities and act as ‘interpersonal facilitators’ through encouragement and enhance participation by leading by example (Raymore, 2002).

Based on Colton's (1987) idea, by investigating children's participation in active sports and the location in which such sports occur, the locality of parks and the facilities available may act as an indicator for their involvement in the future. An ABS (2001) report on leisure pursuits by children in Australia indicates that 59% participate in organised sports in their free time, with boys (66%) more likely to do so than girls (52%). "The most popular organised sports for boys were outdoor soccer (20% of participants), swimming (13%) and Australian Rules Football (also 13%). Netball was top for girls (18% of participants), followed by swimming (16%) and tennis (8%)" (ABS, 2001a). Girls had higher participations rates in cultural activities, 40% verses 20% (ABS, 2001a). The popularity of these organised activities has a direct implication on parks. Are there suitable facilities in parks to accommodate the range of activities and are these activities suited to parks?

Adventure playgrounds are a popular activity for children aged 5 to 12 years, who represent 39% of the users of Melbourne's parks during the weekend (Seddon, 1987). This is supported by Griffin and Archer (2006) who studied visitation to National Parks in Queensland and New South Wales. They found that families with primary aged children had the highest level of visitation to parks (71%) compared to families with preschool age children (56.3%) or secondary aged children (60.3%). The presence of families varies between parks which are judged on size of the playground and park, presence of water, population of neighbouring children, accessibility and proximity from busy roads (Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW), 1981 cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Facilities provided for today's youth include playgrounds and skate parks. Barnes (2003) raises the idea these will become obsolete in future years with an insufficient number of youths utilising such facilities.

Having a perceived lack of satisfactory facilities, teenagers are generally under-represented among park visitors. This reflects their social/peer focus plus a possible lack of transport/park knowledge (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Teenagers may also be involved in active sports which according to the ABS (2001a) are

dominated by activities requiring specific facilities not usually found in metropolitan parks. Friends can assume a similar role to that of parents who act as ‘interpersonal facilitators’. According to Bungum and Vincent (1997:120), “opportunities for successful physical activity experiences, verbal encouragement, and the sharing of successful physical activity experiences of others are suggested to increase activity levels” for female adolescents.

Awareness can be improved if children are introduced to parks through educational institutions. School groups visiting parks have particular prerequisites including, proximity to the school influencing transport costs and available time, parking, shelter, field study centres and interpretive services, toilets, barbeques and trails (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987).

According to the Victorian Liberal Party (2003a) past schemes were introduced to fund the cost of bus travel for country Victorian school groups to undertake educational excursions to Melbourne. The Liberal Party found these programs to be popular with schools throughout rural and regional Victoria. This may be a good opportunity to incorporate visits to metropolitan parks as part of the agenda. The Victorian Liberal Party has made the suggestion that there are opportunities for regional children to visit Melbourne for the 2006 Commonwealth Games under a similar scheme (Liberal Party, 2003a). Could a similar initiative be utilised for park visitation?

#### *Seniors (51 years or older)*

The proportion of adults in Australia aged 65 years and over was 12% in 1997. It is expected to increase to 22% by 2031 (ABS, 2002d) with some estimates as high as 50% of the population (Veal and Lynch, 2001). This increasing age sector is a result of the post World War II baby boomers who are projected to grow from three to five million by 2031. The ABS (2002d) population projection states that “based on assumptions of continued low fertility, and continued small declines in mortality, Australia's population is projected to continue ageing into the next half century”. This population group will be

an important market to attract and maintain. More research into the interests of the seniors market will help determine appropriate recreational experiences.

The post-war years have seen an increase toward people living longer, retiring earlier and leading an active retirement (Mercer, 1994). Current research and policy on ageing tends to focus on the potential 'burden' to society of a large, older population not on the potential economic stimulus created by a growing demand for services. Members of this market segment have low mortgages, substantial assets, recreational skills and spare time and money for leisure goods and services (Mercer, 1994). An ABS (2002d) report on Australia's ageing population indicates "Baby boomers are currently a large and influential market sector and could remain so well into their retirement years" which will have an impact on future government policy. This will have an impact on the demand of more leisure opportunities (Mercer, 1994).

The leisure with which seniors become involved will be related to the social, economic and political conditions that existed when they were younger and by the location in which they live. There is a growing "distinction between the 'young-old' (55-75 years of age) and the 'old-old' (over 75)" (Mercer, 1981:31). The 'young-old' of the 1990s will have benefited from a "more affluent, liberal and 'leisured' era" due to smaller families, shorter working weeks and paid vacations thus resulting in more discretionary income (Mercer, 1981:31). Today's seniors are generally healthier and are better educated than their predecessors (Grant, 2003). Zimmer et al, (1995:8) concluded that the decision for seniors to travel can be linked to age, education, mobility and that "rural residents, older seniors, and those with health problems were much more likely to travel to nearby destinations".

Veal and Lynch (2001) suggest young people are more active in their leisure time whereas older people with more leisure time are less active. In contrast, Mercer (1994) suggests many people in this elderly age category are healthy and active. Blazey (1992) focused on retirement status and found that pre-retirees listed lack of money, time and information as key constraints to leisure participation. The retired segment, who are often

on fixed incomes, “were significantly more likely to be constrained by health conditions, physical energy, perception of age, and disability” (Blazey, 1992:776).

Mercer (1981:31) suggested that the future would show an increase in the levels of “participation in relatively sedentary and inexpensive pursuits such as fishing, photography, picnicking, pleasure driving and short walks in the countryside” with expected declines in active sports. This view was supported by Smith and Mackay (1981 cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987) who suggest increasing age equates to less strenuous exercise. Poor personal mobility is listed as a major constraint toward park visitation by Griffin and Archer (2006). However, research by Grant (2003), suggests active living is more important to today’s seniors than it was to their predecessors, and there are increasing numbers of seniors participating in a variety of physical activities such as walking, masters sports and tennis (Grant, 2003).

There is an opportunity to provide a service for the growing seniors market that has already been identified as having more disposable income. This is supported by a study conducted in North America by Weagley (2004) who found that seniors who followed sound financial planning advice will have more income to spend on active leisure pursuits. He also expressed the need for suppliers of active leisure to understand the leisure preferences of the retired market for they have more ‘time’ and available money to invest in active leisure goods, in return retirees will have improved social and physical welfare and enhanced life-satisfaction. The ABS supports the notion of more available time to participate in recreation activities. In 1997, 21% of people aged 65 and over reported they lived alone and 17% of those living with others felt that they always or often had spare time (ABS, 2002c).

Providing recreational opportunities will not only provide seniors with an outlet to spend their accumulating free time, but it will help to promote social interaction, particularly for those people who spend considerable amounts of time alone. This assertion is supported by Jackson (2000) who suggests that although seniors have fewer constraints related to time and money, ‘isolation’ is an added constraint that may be important. As people age

there is an increase in the amount of time they are likely to spend alone, which is as high as thirteen hours per day (ABS, 2002c).

Among people aged 65 and over, who live alone, many choose to spend more time with friends, acquaintances and other people than those who live with others (ABS, 2002c). The importance on 'interpersonal facilitators' can be applied within this sector where the encouragement to participate by peers or organised groups would contribute to inclusion in an activity (Raymore, 2002). This is supported by Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997) who conducted in-depth interviews to determine how leisure choices are made. They reported that the majority of respondents wanted to share their leisure experiences with another. Parks with suitable recreational programs can provide an ideal setting for such interaction.

To promote more participation by the senior sector, Grant (2003) suggests public awareness campaigns alone are not enough. According to an Australian Labor Party (2003) spokesperson, Aged Care Minister Gavin Jennings, "many ethnic seniors in rural areas are isolated and have little knowledge of aged care services available to them." One strategy proposed by the Australian Labor Party (2003) is to provide rural seniors with an improved understanding of services available to them for health and aged care services, this will include activity groups. A coordinated approach between Parks Victoria and the Federal government could provide mutual benefits for the health sector and parks as a community resource. This could provide parks with an opportunity to market their accessible parks to a growing sector of the population who are currently under using natural settings as shown in Figure 2.2.

Seniors require more control over their place of recreation with safety and accessibility as key concerns. Barnes (2003) highlights the need to consider the views of seniors when planning recreation activities and to specifically ask seniors about their requirements. Mobility issues also need to be considered. This relates to level paths, easy access, seating at points of interest and safe, aesthetic routes (Barnes, 2003). Blazey (1992:776) found that the retired segment "appear to be somewhat less adventurous, preferring

domestic destinations as well as those places they have visited on a previous occasion”. This can be linked to another finding by Blazey (1992:776) whereby retirees have a “fear of certain modes of travel” and they have a lack of “transportation to and from the point of departure”. The retired segment could be regarded as ‘habitual’ decision makers who rely on positive past experiences. Available transport and access to destinations is an important consideration for this sector.

Spotts and Stynes (1984: 11) found “Senior citizens appear to be a particularly important group, since older individuals were found to lack detailed information about parks” and those aged 50 years and over are generally under-represented in parks (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Griffin and Archer (2006) supported the finding that visitation to parks decreased with those over 55 years of age. The reasons they cited as constraints included: poor personal mobility, limited access to parks and the perceived high cost. An absence of persons aged 65 years plus was also noted in a study of weekday use of Lane Cove River State Recreation Area, NSW (Crabbe, 1989). The mediums used to target park users and the distribution of such information is important. From a historical viewpoint, older generations, may have an information deficit of the opportunities available to them. Tower (1997) suggests the marketing of parks was not effectively used until the 1980s thereby generating little awareness.

A successful program introduced more than a decade ago by the Ministry of Sport and Recreation in Western Australia, was specifically aimed at seniors 55 and over, the age lowered to encompass the ‘pre-seniors’ group. “Programs such as group walking, cycling, camping, canoeing, archery, swimming, ballroom dancing and low impact exercise were continually booked out and continue to flourish all over the metropolitan area and the state”(Barnes, 2003:40). Initiatives have been introduced by the current Victorian Government to encourage seniors to increase their participation in physical activities. The 2004 Victorian Seniors festival helped promote ‘*The Age To Be*’ and ‘*Join in the Action*’ and a recent announcement on the ‘*Well For Life*’ campaign are all targeting seniors to become healthier, more active and to ensure a better quality of life (Australian Labor Party, 2004a; 2004b). Such campaigns provide opportunities to host activities in parks.



Ageing of the population can result in the incubation of a host of intrapersonal constraints but if activities are organised to cater for the needs of this age group whilst providing peer support, such obstacles can be overcome.

### **2.3.2 The Influence of Family and Friends**

Peers, members of the community, authority figures, family and friends are all important interpersonal influencers (Figure 2.1). People living and working within a community are as likely to influence visitors and their experience as is the attraction being visited (McKercher and Wong, 2004; Meis, Joyal and Trites, 1995). Researchers suggest that marketing campaigns need to consider the host community through acknowledging their input and maintaining good relationships with them. Host communities in turn, will promote a positive image of the local parks and their surrounding neighbourhood.

Meis, Joyal and Trites (1995:31) stated that as the VFR segment engages in repeat visitation they “are more likely to use friends and family, word-of-mouth information along with their own knowledge from previous visits as their main sources of information”. The Natural Resources and Environment Committee report that 75% of information about parks is recommended through friends and relatives (1987).

In several tourism decision making models (Mayo and Jarvis, 1981; Moutinho, 1987; Middleton, 2001) authors have factored in the influence of family and friends. In a study by Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997) it would appear that people are less concerned by structural constraints, placing more emphasis on making the most of the time they have available with their social network of people. Their study found that people often “restructured their days so that they could find time to share with others” and “they compromised on activity for the sake of being with a partner or friend” (Samdahl and Jekubovich, 1997: 448/449).

What is known of the 'Friends and Relatives' sector is that they make a considerable contribution to tourism/recreation expenditure simply by acting as hosts. Elisa Backer, Southern Cross University, recently discussed her provisional findings from research into the 'Family and Friends' market. In her study on the Sunshine Coast, she found that the host has a strong role in decision making, influencing choice of activities and length of stay (pers.comm. 22 June 2004). Linked to the phenomena of increased participation in 'Home Leisure' (section 2.3.6), one could assume that by making improvements to the home and purchasing home based recreational products such as pools and home entertainment systems, there is less of a need to seek alternative experiences beyond the home environment.

### *Family Groups*

Park settings enable families and friends to interact outside the family home. Labone and Wearing (1994) suggest that parks provide an ideal venue for social gatherings which appeal to women. As a result women have a strong influence on family leisure behaviour and decision making. This notion was discussed by Bryson (1985, cited in Labone and Wearing, 1994) who suggests that women who are increasing their participation in the workforce, have more power in family decisions. Nichols and Snepenger (1999) develop this to suggest there is a blurring of sex roles which affects vacation behaviour. When considering interpersonal factors (Figure 2.1), the influence of the woman in the household to make decisions would appear to be increasingly important.

Family groups are arguably one of the more adaptable tourist group types. Decrop (1999b) identified a segment he labelled 'adaptable tourists' being those who revise decisions and modify behaviour according to situations as they arise, for example, the birth of a baby or death of a travel companion. He identifies some key characteristics of 'adaptable tourists' in that they are usually married, holiday with family and/or friends or as a couple without their children. Decrop (1999b:128) suggests that "Each time, they adapt to the different circumstances affecting the decision mode".

Research on ‘family decision making styles’ as described by Mayo and Jarvis (1981) is divided into four different categories: ‘husband – dominated’, ‘wife – dominated’, ‘joint influence – individual decision’ and ‘joint influence – joint decision’. ‘Joint influence – individual decision’ is where an individual makes the eventual decision after receiving considerable influence from their partner. ‘Joint influence – joint decisions’ are described by Mayo and Jarvis (1981:100) as a compromise where decisions are agreed upon and typically vacation travel is decided “with both husband and wife exerting nearly an equal influence over the decision”. This is supported by Nichols and Snepenger (1999) who discuss decision making within three categories, combining joint decisions as one: ‘joint decision makers’. They acknowledge that ‘joint decision makers’ now make two-thirds of travel decisions. In Nichols and Snepenger’s (1999) Alaskan travel survey conducted in 1983, they identified 1,753 families amongst a sample of 3717 pleasure travel parties. Joint decision makers and their families were found to be more likely to utilise a range of information sources, were inclined to consult friends and relatives, plan their trip sooner, participate in many leisure activities and based on their intentions, were likely to be repeat customers compared with the other two decision making types. Moutinho (1987) discusses joint decision making and found husbands dominate the ‘accommodation’ and ‘destination point’ decisions whereas joint decisions are usually made about the activities. This dominance changes depending on life stage and the presence of children who have an impact on activity choice.

It is important to recognise that family members influence travel decisions. This includes children as well as adults. This assertion has often been ignored in studies which have focused on individual opinions and not the group decision/behaviour that families participate in (Labone and Wearing, 1994). Crompton (1979:416) revealed that tourists have different socio-psychological motives for travel which include “enhancement of kinship relationships and facilitation of social interaction”. When a family travels together there is an opportunity to enrich relationships.

Pitts and Woodside (1986) highlight the importance of family and their attributes when selecting an attraction to visit. Families are more inclined to involve themselves in

suitable recreation to provide experiences for all the members of their family unit. Mayo and Jarvis (1981:102) suggest children have a strong, “indirect influence over family travel”. Parents will consider the needs of children and incorporate this into their travel planning including destination and activity choice. Although Mayo and Jarvis (1981) suggest children have minimal influence on en route travel decisions they affect impulse decisions including eateries and time spent on activities. Raymore (2002) views children as ‘facilitators’, where parents’ leisure participation options are increased through the presence of their child. Smith and Mackay (1981, cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987:79) suggest “the number and age of children in the household unit indicates participation in the more family oriented pursuits such as picnicking and sightseeing and this possibly modifies the parents’ participation in individual activities”.

Family groups are a sector which undertakes the majority of day trips in Australia (Labone and Wearing, 1994) and according to Veal and Lynch (2001) they are the major users of National Parks. An ABS report (2003c) shows households with young children are the highest users (62%) of natural areas. This is supported by Griffin and Archer (2006) who found that families with primary aged children are the highest life stage user group (71 percent) of National Parks in Queensland and New South Wales. This can be compared to other life stage, park user groups: childless couples (67 percent), families with secondary school aged children (60 percent), families with pre-school aged children (56 percent), empty nesters (53 percent) and singles (49 percent).

Family groups visiting natural areas will all have different individual expectations of the park and how the setting can provide them with a leisure experience. With regard to Gibson’s (1986, cited in Raymore, 2002:38) ‘concept of affordance’, a park must be “perceived to be potentially satisfying and rewarding for it to be perceived as a leisure opportunity”. If parks have enough activity choice then it will be able to cater to more life stages. In understanding decisions about park use, there is a need to examine the family’s expectations of park activities and the motivation which supports the intended activity. How does the perceived visit differ from the on-site experience (Labone and Wearing,

1994)? The view that ‘perceived experience’ may differ from ‘actual experience’ is supported by Colton (1987:354) who states that “the same activity may be classified differently according to the situation, and the interpretations and meanings that the recreationists lend to them”. Some parents may perceive supervising and caring for children in a park setting, a parental duty while others may enjoy this as a tourist activity in its own right.

A visit to a park 50 years ago would have been a very different experience from that of today. Mercer (1981) illustrates this point by suggesting a park with 2,000 patrons per year compared to 200,000 visitors per year 50 years later would be a different experience. An individual’s perception and expectation of a leisure pursuit is based on what an “individual has come to know as ‘normality’” therefore, a child today, growing up in a more crowded leisure environment will have different tolerance levels than did previous generations (Mercer, 1981:32). The current generation may regard this learnt tolerance as an intrapersonal facilitator whereas, an older person may perceive the crowded leisure environment a constraint.

### **2.3.3 Awareness**

Awareness could be considered an intrapersonal facilitator or constraint if one takes into account past experience (Figure 2.1). It may however, be the influence of an interpersonal facilitator who makes another aware of a leisure opportunity. Awareness as a structural constraint may be the availability of information.

The promotion of parks to raise awareness amongst the local community is an important aspect in which park management agencies must continually engage. Archer and Wearing (2002) perceive that the continued delivery of quality park experiences will enhance and improve community attitudes towards parks and place greater value on natural areas and the organisations that manage these areas.

Given the need to reach more potential visitors, park management agencies need to expand their traditional resource base. Communication of park information has, in the past, been presented predominantly through on-site, interpretive experiences such as signs, visitor centres, exhibits, schools initiatives and rangers. Archer and Wearing (2002) suggest more use of 'off-site' communication which creates an opportunity to reach the infrequent or non-park user market as well as regular users. The promotion of parks through tourist information centres, publications and the Internet reaches a broader audience.

According to several authors there is a need to make more use of the Internet as a medium to reach potential markets particularly when more travellers are using the Internet to search for destinations (Barry, 2001; Commonwealth of Australia, 2002; Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2003a; Tourism NSW, 2001). The Bureau of Tourism Research (BTR) has found "that Internet users account for 11% of all domestic overnight visitors, with the majority of their visitations being for holiday purposes" (Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2003a:63). It is necessary to utilise travel agents and the Internet for product distribution. There is a need for more packaging and promotion of the recreational opportunities on offer (Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2003a).

Dumas (1980) highlighted the need to raise awareness of the opportunities in parks through the use of media and advertising. Results in Queensland and New South Wales confirm lack of awareness has a direct impact on visitation to National Parks. This was perceived as a major constraint by non-visitors to parks, particularly the younger (18-34) segment (Griffin and Archer 2006).

It is important to improve understanding of people's attitudes towards parks and their use of parks. Therefore it is essential to identify not only what the public perceive was good about the parks after their visit but also what was lacking. Archer and Wearing (2002) stress the importance of matching an accurate image and potential experience when promoting to particular target markets. They suggest that a prepared visitor is more likely

to appreciate their on-site experience. The activities and facilities found in parks will match the expectations of the visitor and therefore improve levels of satisfaction. Satisfied visitors are then good advocates of parks in their word-of-mouth recommendations and their opinions of management of parks. Involving the community when planning may help to enhance relationships between the community and the park providers (Tower, 1997).

The urban parks that are frequently visited and have a high amenity and leisure value have genuine community support (Freestone and Nichols, 2003). The people who live and work in the community are as likely to influence visitors and their experience as much as the attraction being visited. Marketing campaigns need to consider the community. By acknowledging community input and maintaining good relationships, they will in turn promote a positive image of the park and the surrounding neighbourhood. It is therefore clear that marketing of parks, for both potential and current users, incorporates both on-site and off-site marketing and interpretation.

### *Signage*

Signs are imperative for tourists and visitors to parks. Potential visitors need clear directions to locate parks and once at the park, they need interpretive signs to guide them to the desired location(s). Road signs increase awareness particularly for the larger or more remote parks which are reached by private vehicles. Awareness of smaller parks and linear trails can be enhanced by the provision of signs (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). In a coordinated effort, parks can be linked up as part of a trail for example; the Diamond Valley bicycle route in Victoria or scenic drives.

Ideas proposed by the European Commission (2000) to increase demand are to design routes or trails around themes. The South Australian Tourist Commission (1997) suggests improvements in interpretive signage to improve awareness. This is a notion supported by other organisations including Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (2003a) who considered signs to be a weakness in Victoria. A view discussed

by the Education Department who state that access to parks in particular was inhibited through a “lack of sign posting of entrance roads and trails” (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987:89). Possible ways of improving services for disadvantaged people include multi-lingual and Braille signs (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Although it must be noted that increased signage raises the dilemma of visual pollution.

The need for improved directional signage extends beyond Victoria. In the Commonwealth of Australia’s (2003:39) strategy to improve tourism, it is stated that “signage often means the difference between visitors stopping to explore a region or attraction, or driving through”. The same theory can be applied to parks whereby if signs define tourist routes, scenic lookouts and walking trails, this may attract potential visitors. Byrne (1981,cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987:74), “estimated that park use was increased by 280 per cent after road signs were upgraded near the entrance to Melba Gully State Park”.

#### **2.3.4 Available Time**

Time is a major constraint due to work, school or other commitments. Fairweather, (2002:15) states, “Australians are now travelling less than they were 3 years ago and travelling for slightly shorter periods”. Domestic tourists are mostly travelling on weekends and the length of stay is usually no more than three nights (Fairweather, 2002). The numbers of domestic overnight visitors to Victoria on a short break (one to three days) equates to 76% (Tourism Victoria, 2005).

Short breaks account for 80% of the intrastate market (Tourism Victoria, 2002). The NVS 2003 data records a 1% increase over two years in the regional Victorian, domestic overnight travel sector. The time available for regional Victorians visiting Melbourne is a major consideration for this thesis. People have less time to take holidays and so shorter breaks are a popular trend. As regional Victorians’ average length of stay in Melbourne is between one to three days, this leaves little time to travel to and enjoy time in



metropolitan parks. When considering the activities that visitors prioritise in their short time frame, park visitation is considerably low, about 2% (NVS, 2002).

An ABS survey completed in 2001 revealed that a lack of time was the main reason (36%) that people did not visit a World Heritage area, national or state park (refer to Appendix 2). Lack of time was recorded as a major constraint by two thirds of 18 – 54 year olds with regard to visiting National Parks (Griffin and Archer 2006). This can be attributed to work and family commitments.

Many regional Victorians stay with family and friends while visiting Melbourne. Regional Victorian visitor data provided by Destination Melbourne (2004) indicates that 71% of regional visitors stayed in friends or relatives property and 62% visited friends and relatives. Liz Seymon, Chief Executive of Destination Melbourne indicated that although VFR is a difficult market to penetrate, it needs to be embraced with friends and relatives acting as ambassadors to show guests around Melbourne and surrounds (pers.comm. 4 March 2004). If the hosts are well informed and visit their local metropolitan park on a regular basis, they may be more inclined to encourage their regional visitors to join them at a park or make the suggestion to visit.

A number of studies have been compiled in relation to time spent in tourist activities. The main reasons regional Victorians visit Melbourne as stated in the 2001 NVS data are visiting family (33%), visiting friends (18%), business (14%) and attending a special event or festival (4%). Once in Melbourne, the main activities regional Victorians participate in include visiting friends (68%), eating out (58%), shopping (43%) and sightseeing (25%) (NVS, 2002). The importance of the VFR market is not limited to the intrastate market. Tourism Victoria (2005:3) reports “of all domestic visitor nights in Victoria for the year ending June 2004, 44% were spent with friends or relatives and 25% in a hotel, motel or resort. Compared overall with visitors to Australia, visitors to Victoria were more likely to stay with friends or relatives.

A daily time use survey conducted by the ABS has reported variations of available leisure time for people of differing gender or lifecycle stage. The ABS conducted a survey in 1997 which reported the proportion of time spent on daily activities (Veal and Lynch 2001). The sample included 7000 people in 3000 households who kept diaries of their daily activities. This was completed in the months of February, May, September and November so a good representation across the year has been recorded. Limitations to this study were that the participants were above the age of 15 years, therefore time use of the important youth market is only represented through the interrelated activities of the adult respondents. The survey attempted to alleviate confusion of multiple activities by enabling respondents to select a 'primary' and 'secondary' activity and record 'for whom' they were conducting the activity. The definition of leisure may differ between respondents. Some people regard gardening or home renovation as leisure activities while others would consider these as domestic chores as categorised in the 'time use survey'.

Time can be divided into four main categories as described by the ABS (2004d): *necessary time*, which includes sleeping, eating and personal hygiene. *Contracted time*, for instance paid work and regular education. *Committed time*, such as setting up a household, child care, shopping or performing voluntary work. The ABS (2004d) defines *free time* as "the amount of time left when the previous three types of time have been taken out of a person's day".

The results showed that 22% of time was dedicated to free time, second highest to necessary time 46% (ABS, 2004d). Men and women have different time priorities but overall there is little difference to the amount of free time available, men 20% and women 18% (ABS, 2004d). The ABS (2004d) cites, "Men spent almost twice as much time, on average, as women on contracted time activities (19% compared with 11%), while women spent nearly twice as much time as men on committed time activities (21% compared with 12%)". Men have an average of 234 minutes per day and women have an average of 236 minutes per day of home leisure time (ABS, 2002a).

Questions were raised about the number of children, family type and the time parents spent on child care activities. Parents with children have less leisure time than those without, but the difference is only slight (ABS, 2004d). Women, regardless of their domestic situation, have less leisure time, single men fairing the best with 384 minutes per day and couples with dependent children having the least amount of time, men (254 minutes) and women (239 minutes) (Veal and Lynch, 2001). A sample of 543 mothers of young children responded to a questionnaire conducted by Brown, Brown, Miller and Hansen (2001). The results showed that a majority reported a lack of time, money and energy inhibited them from actively participating in leisure. The finding stressed the importance of access to social support. This was “identified as a critical factor in allowing mothers to negotiate constraints” and the authors recommended that future health campaigns should “focus on programs that stimulate social support from family and friends” (Brown, et al 2001). Parks could act as venues to host support groups for mothers with young children.

### **2.3.5 Distance**

With the onset of more reliable and quicker transport, improved routes to destinations and improvements in telecommunications providing less need to travel, distance remains an important constraint for potential travellers (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1999). Distance can be considered in terms of walking and driving. Researchers have found a collective list of constraints with regard to destination decision making. Primary emphasis has been placed on the distance people are prepared to travel when determining recreation choice (Um and Crompton, 1999).

‘Cognitive distance’, is defined as the “impression formed in the mind of the distance between places that are not directly visible” (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1999:301). This distance tends to be exaggerated, particularly in city destinations or when estimating short distances. According to Walmsley and Jenkins (1999), the effort a potential traveller places into a short journey, is as great as for a journey substantially longer. Similar decisions are involved, for example, the decision to go, preparations and departure.

Consequently, they recommend that promotional material makes tourists aware of real distances. This should alleviate the problem where some activities or attractions are substituted for others due to mistaken impressions of distance. Research has shown that densely settled and downtown areas can appear larger than they are in reality (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1999). Such impressions may give metropolitan parks and their location a distorted image.

The MMBW 1981 survey which studied metropolitan parks found that parks often catered for local neighbourhoods (cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). A limitation to the survey was the selection of small, local urban parks for observation which may not have been representative. However the study did reveal that the majority of people walked or cycled within a 0.5km radius from the surveyed parks. Walking distance to urban parks is considered to be more crucial than availability of cars or public transport. The proximity of busy roads and railways act as further barriers to distance (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987).

For distances up to 300km, private vehicles, coaches and trains are the prime source of travel (Law, 2002). Access to a car is almost essential for participation in most away-from-home leisure activities. Gold (1977, cited in Mercer, 1981:33) found “travel for leisure and recreational purposes accounts for approximately 30 percent of car usage”. As the population has grown, distances have been reduced due to road improvements and improved access which provide better opportunities for weekend and vacation time and leads to an expanded potential market share (Law, 2002, Mercer, 1994). A reduction in travelling time and cost greatly extend the distance tourists are prepared to travel. Furthermore, improved organisation of transport, including package tours can open up to more visitors (Law, 2002).

Mercer (1981:28) identifies that outdoor recreation space in Australia shows a “spatial concentration within two to three hours’ drive of the main settlement centres” and Melbourne in particular has a high concentration of holiday homes found within a 150 kilometre radius of the CBD. The close proximity holiday home purchasing or ‘sea

change' along Victoria's coastline has been discussed by Burnley and Murphy (2004). They discuss 'perimetropolitan regions' whereby those seeking a lifestyle change by purchasing in coastal areas remain within a commutable distance to metropolitan jobs. Accessibility to parks and coastal areas is complicated by congestion. Longer travel times are "caused by railways and heavy traffic on the major roads in the inner parts of Melbourne" (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987:34).

In a discussion about short break travel, Law (2002:59) states that "In general, people do not want to travel too far, or at least spend too much time travelling as this will eat into the time available". In the United Kingdom, 240 kilometres is common for short breaks whereas day trips are within a radius of 160 kilometres (Law, 2002). Once at a destination, people like their recreational "experience within 100 metres of the family car" (Mercer, 1981:42). A report supplied by Parks Victoria suggests that "day visitors nearly all come from nearby areas up to 70 kilometres away" and "few day-trippers are prepared to travel more than 100 kilometres from their home" (Zanon and Frost, 2001:2). Zanon revealed that up to 60% of park visits derive from those within a 15 minute drive radius of a metropolitan park and concluded that "people do not want to travel long distances to visit a[n] urban park" (Zanon, 1996:23). With the variety of parks found in Melbourne however, "it is accepted that people use open space outside their resident LGA or municipality" (Leary and McDonnell, 2001:36)

Outer urban areas have larger open spaces compared to inner metropolitan locations (Leary and McDonnell, 2001) yet transport accessibility to and within such parks may be difficult. 'Accessible size' is another variable that could be considered with regard to park visitation. In Zanon (2001) the parks with lower visitation rates had the commonality of being small in accessible size. Zanon (2001:20) described this as, "The size of the land area which is open and accessible without restriction".

Distance can be considered a constraint if the perceived proximity of an attraction is further than an urban tourist is prepared to travel. However, if an attraction was perceived

to be in close proximity or within an acceptable distance a tourist is prepared to travel, distance could be considered a facilitator to participation.

### **2.3.6 Alternative Leisure Activities**

#### *Home Leisure*

In the past, parks provided a communal open space described by as ‘neighbourhood lungs’ and the ‘virtual cornerstone of community life’ (Freestone and Nichols, 2003). The study by Freestone and Nichols (2003) concentrated on council managed pockets of undeveloped land interwoven amongst housing. The initial philosophy of urban park creation was based on the British model of providing communal, open settings where locals could participate in ‘informal recreation’. In the 1970s these parks became less popular (Freestone and Nichols, 2003). Parks can only be regarded as structural facilitators toward leisure participation if society perceives it as such an opportunity (Raymore, 2002). Attention has since shifted toward home-based activities with an emphasis on improving the home as a site for leisure. Several authors indicate a trend toward the home as a prime leisure location including: Mackay (1994), Mercer (1994), Pigram and Jenkins (1999) and Veal and Lynch (2001). People are spending approximately four hours per day on home leisure activities (half their total leisure time) and this figure increases with age (ABS, 2002a).

There is a trend for people to retreat to their ‘domestic domain’ as opposed to ‘getting away from it all’ and this relates to the stressful urban environment (Mackay, 1994). People wish to “retreat to the comfort, privacy and, above all security of home base; an escapist response to our ancient urge to seek the shelter and protection of a cave” (Mackay, 1994: 222). Mackay (1994:222) identifies Melbourne market researcher, Brian Sweeney who reports that homes are becoming fortresses due to our obsession with privacy; Sweeney names this phenomena “fortress mentality”. The Mackay report (1986, cited in Mackay, 1994) on *Australians at Home* supports the description by Sweeney suggesting that in metropolitan centres the home is becoming a fortress where people can

fence themselves off from the rest of the world and create a private zone. This form of escapism can be linked to the growing popularity of 'spectatorism' and globalisation of leisure interests (Mercer, 1994).

People are favouring private, domestic sphere leisure compared to leisure in the public realm (Mercer, 1981, Mercer, 1994). Pigram and Jenkins (1999:141) state that "Features which once had an important recreational function" such as "the town square, the village green, the dance-hall-cum-cinema, even the local 'pub' or bar in some cases, have given way to home-based recreation, centred on the television set, perhaps the backyard pool, and all manner of electronic gadgetry".

In recent years, people have invested in improving their private domain which in turn allows the home owner to reap the benefits and spend more time in their chosen environment. In the 1970's, Australian home owners spent approximately \$300 million on their gardens (Mercer, 1994). The ABS (2000) reports the amount spent on garden goods and services was \$722 million in 1988/89 and had increased to \$1780 million in 1998/99, a rise of 146.5% (Veal and Lynch, 2001).

People are turning their attention to making improvements in the home environment. Home renovation includes adding or changing a feature or restoring or extending the house (ABS, 2003c). In 1999, 58% of home owners stated they had participated in renovating their homes in the previous ten years, 27% had carried out renovations in the previous two years. This saw a boom in the building industry prior to the introduction of GST in July 2000 (ABS, 2003c).

The ABS (2001b) reports that 6.8% of households in Melbourne's metropolitan region have a swimming pool. In the year 1998/99, the ABS (2000, cited in Veal and Lynch, 2001) reports, \$2824 million was spent by Australian households on in-ground pools and landscaping. An advertisement for home swimming pools highlights the discomfort of crowded summer beaches and the opportunity to spend hours of fun with family and friends as key reasons to purchase a pool for the home (Veal and Lynch, 2001). Mercer

(1981) also suggests pollution in beaches and parks encourages people to choose leisure in the domestic environment. The home environment is convenient and accommodates people from all age groups by providing a range of activities.

Television watching was the most popular summer activity recorded in the 1991 National Recreation Participation Survey (NRPS) with 93.6 % participation (Veal and Lynch, 2001). The ABS (2002a) state, “by 1991, 99% of households had at least one TV set”. Ninety seven percent of Australian children watch television or videos during their free time. Over half spent 20 hours or more in a two-week period watching television or videos (ABS, 2001a). Similar trends exist in the United Kingdom where people watch home video instead of attending the cinema and listen to compact discs instead of attending a concert. With increased entertainment and recreation equipment installed in the home there is a reduced need to go out to be entertained or to relax (Mackay, 1994). Technology has become more advanced and the price of electrical goods has been reduced making ownership of items like video cassette recorders and Digital Versatile Disc players more affordable. In 1976 a video cassette recorder sold for over \$4000 whereas now they are nearer \$100 (ABS, 2002a). There was an increase of 80% between 1981 and 1993 of video cassette recorder ownership in households (ABS, 2002a).

Video cassette recorders, computers, compact disc players and Digital Versatile Disc players are all increasing the amount of leisure possibilities in the home (ABS 2002a) therefore reducing the desire to leave home. For example, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) compiled a report on leisure behaviour in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. People were so busy with television and video viewing that there was little time left to leave the house and participate in other activities (Kolar, 1993 cited in Mercer, 1994). Mercer describes Australian society as a ‘spectator society’. However, the AIFS reports that people would like to be participating in other activities but a lack of time was an issue and “a paucity of accessible, and attractive, recreational opportunities nearby, meant that it was merely regarded as the ‘best available’ option” (Mercer, 1994:11).



Computers and the Internet are increasingly popular in Australia. This is another medium for recreation and allows the user to enjoy home based leisure. The ABS (2003d) state, “Between 1994 and 2000, the number of households with home computers doubled, and between 1996 and 2000, the number of households with home Internet access increased almost ninefold”. Personal computers allow people to work or study at home and 60% of people aged 25 – 54 years use their computer for work related purposes. Games are another popular use with 55% of young adults (18-24) utilising their computer for such a purpose (ABS, 2003d).

The Internet provides an immediate communication channel and the use of email has become increasingly popular to keep in touch with family and friends. The ABS (2003d) report “email may be especially useful in facilitating communication for the elderly, those with impaired mobility and those living alone or in remote areas”. People living in rural areas were less likely to have used the Internet but those who have the opportunity, did so more often and for longer periods of time than did those who live in the city (ABS, 2003d).

In 2000, 15% of all adult Internet users had ordered goods or services over the Internet (a 3% rise from the year before) (ABS, 2003d). The opportunities for rural people to shop online could provide yet more reason to reduce the need to travel to city centres. Service provision has made home leisure more inviting by providing goods or services to a person’s doorstep. Home delivered food appeals to the ‘cave instinct’ and is convenient for the working parents. There is a growth in Internet supermarket shopping such as Coles online. People can enjoy the comfort and safety of their own home whilst communicating online or participating in home shopping (Mackay, 1994).

Cushman (1981, cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987) suggests a large section of the population is either unemployed or has a limited disposable income and these people seek inexpensive and home based leisure pursuits. An ABS (2004c) survey of average household income displays the inequality in wealth distribution in Australia (refer to Appendix 3). Research by Grant (2003) suggests the majority of

leisure conducted by the senior market takes place in or close to home. This may suggest elderly people narrow their leisure interests over time opting for inexpensive, passive pursuits.

If home renovation, gardening and recreational activities are increasingly pursued in private homes then these phenomena will give regional Victorians less motivation to spend money on travelling away from home. This question will be investigated under a general theme of ‘competition’ and ‘preferred activities’ when conducting regional focus groups as part of this thesis. An inventory of facilities in regional areas might prove that there is sufficient entertainment thereby reducing the need there once was to commute to Melbourne. This in turn may have an effect on other tourist areas that were once included on the Melbourne region agenda.

### *Safety Issues*

Since the September 11 terrorist attack in 2001, both national and international travel has decreased (ABS 2002e). Global warfare remains a concern for many people even when considering visiting a park (Capitol Hill Blue, 2003). Particularly significant to Australia is a further issue of extreme weather and dangerous wildlife. Such factors may not deter domestic visitation to parks as significantly as it may international visitors or immigrants who have had the fear instilled by immigration publicity documents (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987).

Some urban parks are considered ‘left over’ spaces of land where surveillance is poor and are even labelled as ‘enemy territory’ (Freestone and Nichols, 2003). There is a growing fear of urban violence in Australia and home is perceived as a safe haven (Mackay, 1994). A report by Cranz in the USA found the perception of parks to be “both an image of peace and tranquillity that escapes or transcends the hard edge of the built environment: but they are also an image of menace, lurking danger, a violent part of the urban jungle itself” (Seddon, 1987:2.4). Vandalism of facilities can cause anxiety for park users. It is suggested by Cunningham and Jones (2000) that women specifically may be

inhibited in their use of parks in Australia through a common fear of threatening individuals or groups. Although this fear does not dominate negative perceptions it is an issue Cunningham and Jones (2000) recommend park designers and managers need to address. Baum and Palmer (2002:360) make the recommendation that parks should have “community facilitators (who could play a role in increasing safety in the park...)”. Certain activities in parks have inherent risks such as rock climbing. As park access is improved and more people utilise such parks, the more likely it is that individuals will undertake potentially dangerous activities without being aware of the precautions that should be taken. A series of fatal accidents led to a combined effort by the media and government to alert potential visitors to hazards for example, ‘safe boating’ on Port Philip Bay (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). This may have a negative impact on ‘park visitation’ particularly if parks are perceived to have safety issues or when negative images are portrayed in the media.

Activity organisers are key figures in the improvement of park visitation. An important consideration is the recent large increase in public liability insurance. This issue has forced many small business operators out of business and may cast doubt on future operations. It is claimed that there is a continued need for the government to ensure instructors are trained and that safety standards are maintained (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). If there are fewer operators in parks, this may lead to fewer activities available and less publicity for an area.

### **2.3.7 Gender Differences**

The following evaluation considers the differences found between males and females in leisure participation. While there are some differences, it could be assumed that there is less of a gender divide than there has been in previous years. Social acceptance may produce less intrapersonal constraints in future years.

The nature of the leisure activity undertaken by males and females is substantially different. There are a variety of studies which indicate that women are participating in

more home-based leisure than men. Statistics provided by the NRPS indicate that women do participate in a number of home-based activities and “are more constrained in engaging in leisure activities outside the home than men” (Veal and Lynch, 2001:132). A study of women’s patterns of recreation by Green, Hebron and Woodward (1990:24) described women’s leisure as “inexpensive, home-based pursuits” and included “those activities which involved safe transport”. Females participate in social and entertainment activities more than males; therefore the home environment is an ideal base to undertake such activities (Krahe, 1997; Labone and Wearing, 1994).

Based on a sample of 2000 people aged over 14, the NRPS conducted in the 1991 summer season, showed women have the highest participation levels in a number of activities but these are based around the home. The percentages for home-based activities for women record reading (76.2%) and listening to the radio (75.5%) as the two most popular activities (refer to Appendix 4). When engagement in these activities are compared with those activities that take place outside the home environment, the highest sport percentages were aerobics (8.6%) and swimming (17.8%) which predominantly take place in leisure centres (Veal and Lynch, 2001). It is also necessary to consider this survey measured the popularity of a pre-determined selection of activities that the participant engaged in the week prior to interview. This method, unlike the time use diary method conducted by the ABS in 1992 and 1997, relies on the participant’s memory and does not account for time spent in each of the listed activities.

In contrast to the finding that highlights a substantial difference between leisure interests of men and women, it would appear the differences in home-based activities are minimal. Men record higher participation levels in the home-based activities than those activities men experienced outside of the home (refer to Appendix 4). This may contribute to the notion of home-based leisure becoming more popular in today’s society. This may also reflect that gender may be a determinant in influencing family decisions for leisure activities or at least the location in which they take place; this has been discussed as an interpersonal variable in section 2.3.2.

### **2.3.8 Transport**

#### *Private Transport*

The use of the car to reach tourist destinations by far outweighs any other transport type. The 2001 National Visitor survey recorded 91% of intrastate visitors travelling by car (Tourism Victoria, 2002). Visitors travelling by car to Melbourne on long weekends are reportedly faced with dilemmas when using the City Link. Customers must commence travel “between midday on Friday and be concluded at midnight on Sunday” (City Link, 2004). According to the Victorian Liberal Party, a weekend pass does not include the public holiday on Monday therefore users pay for an extra day pass. Casual and regional users of City Link have requested the service be reviewed (Liberal Party, 2004b).

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (2003a:78) state, “Addressing the impediments to a better road system has figured prominently among the transport infrastructure issues raised by people in regional Australia”. There is a growing use of regional roads for freight. A report by the Parliament of New South Wales recommends getting freight off the roads and back onto rail (NSW Legislative Council Hansard, 2005). Allocation of the Better Roads Trust Fund as outlined by Vic Roads (2003), places importance on improving access and reducing congestion and aims to improve “the efficiency and safety of major freight routes”. If congestion was reduced this would decrease the travelling time regional visitors currently experience.

#### *Cost of fuel*

Mercer (1981:33) reports that between the years “1967 to 1976 the proportion of the average family’s budget devoted to running the household car escalated from 7 to 10 per cent”. Mercer reported in 1981 that the petrol prices had more than doubled which was placing more pressure on the poorer families to decide what they will relinquish in order to maintain use of the car. Although this report was 25 years ago, as a result of global uncertainty, warfare and finite oil supplies, fuel will remain an uncertain commodity

which is subject to shortages and fluctuating prices. The current fuel cost situation would appear to represent similar levels of household expenditure. The 'Household Expenditure Survey 2003-04' highlighted some of the most significant spending increases over a five year period, with petrol up by 26% (ABS 2006).

As fuel stops are necessary in both directions, fuel supplies and prices may be a constraining factor for regional Victorians visiting Melbourne. Fuel prices are relatively similar between Melbourne and regional towns, the average difference being 4.9 cents per litre (Shell, 2004). Fuel accounts for 12% of expenditure on overnight travel and 23% for day trips. "Expenditure on fuel increased by 40% since December 1998, representing by far the greatest increase in percentage terms of any of the major expenditure items" (Fairweather, 2002:19).

Peak travel times including weekends and public holidays see petrol prices rise in anticipation of an increase in tourist traffic. A ministerial report lists the petrol prices for the 2002 Easter break (Tuckey, 2002). The prices show the rapid 22% mark up within a week. The price of fuel and the maintenance of private vehicles are forming a large part of a household's leisure budget (Veal and Lynch, 2001).

### *Public Transport*

The cost associated with public transport is a structural constraint for low income earners and seniors (Figure 2.1). This is particularly relevant when visitors wish to take public transport to more remote parks. Families and individuals on low incomes find the cost of rail/bus transport to be prohibitive thereby reducing access to parks (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Many National and metropolitan parks are considered "inconvenient or impossible to reach by public transport" (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987:34). The more remote locations do not support dense populations therefore it is difficult to justify a permanent public transport service; the same can not be said for metropolitan parks and the Melbourne coastline, which need improvements for direct access.

Public transport schedules do not readily facilitate access to parks during non-work periods such as weekends and public holidays (Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (DCFL) cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). ‘Seniors Week’ held in March 2004 provided a good opportunity for senior regional visitors to visit Melbourne and take advantage of free public transport (Australian Labor Party, 2004a). However a representative from the state opposition party, Ms Coote alleges senior country residents usually “have a hard enough time getting to the city” (Liberal Party, 2004c). Although not empirical observations, such political viewpoints are acknowledged. Although the majority of intrastate visitors use a private car to visit metropolitan Melbourne public transport is an increasingly important factor to consider. Regional visitor data provided by Destination Melbourne highlights that railway was the second most popular form of transport (8%) when travelling to Melbourne. According to Barnes (2003) and the DCFL submissions, seniors feel there is a lack of suitable public transport in general. Focus groups in this study will have the opportunity to raise this should it be considered a high priority concern.

An ABS report (2003e) supports this view showing ‘access’ and ‘timing’ were the two main reasons people do not use public transport. Almost one-third of people who do not use public transport reported that there was no service available in their area and one-quarter said that the public transport service was not available at a convenient time; refer to Appendix 5 (ABS, 2003e).

### **2.3.9 Socio-economic Considerations**

The demands of work including the stress levels and time spent at the work place, other responsibilities people assume through work and the commuting time to and from work all decrease the amount of time available for leisure pursuits (Mercer, 1981). Barnes (1989:14) supports the link between time and work and suggests there may be differences with the availability of ‘free time’ “so irregular hours (such as those worked by service workers) could be a constraint”. Other considerations include the actual amount of the

weekly household income, the price of recreational goods and services and the preferences of individuals (Barnes, 1989). In a study of visitor use in Queensland and New South Wales National Parks, young members of high socio-economic groups felt there was not enough time to engage in park visits, prioritising career and personal goals (Griffin, Wearing and Archer 2004).

Commonwealth of Australia (2002:57) states “While Australians spend \$54 billion annually on domestic tourism, 30% of working Australians do not currently take an annual holiday”. One of the reasons discussed by Wilson (2005) is that employees are ‘cashing in’ on their holiday entitlement. ‘Job insecurity’ may also be a potential problem. Moutinho (2000) associates ‘job insecurity’ with ‘near-to-home syndrome’ which inhibits people from long distance travel. Such people place more emphasis on travel at weekends and mutual days off. Assuming more people would like to take a holiday, by persuading a small proportion of those not currently taking a holiday but who are in a position to do so, it will generate tourism revenue for the sector and communities.

Lack of money is included as a significant barrier toward recreation participation (Figure 2.1) and limits the frequency of participation (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Relative poverty, as in youth, retirement, or the early years of family formation is recorded as a constraint by Mercer (1981). Low income earners rate visiting parks as non-essential when there are higher priorities such as food and accommodation. Those who own a car can not justify the expense of travelling long distances for recreation (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). This was represented in research conducted by Griffin, Wearing and Archer (2004) where participants in lower socio-economic groups cited park entrance fees, travel and accommodation as expensive. Such perceived costs inhibit park visitation; however, parks as a resource are generally free. Compared to many other forms of possible recreation opportunities in the low cost category, parks present good value.

An early study by La Rocca (1978, cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987) researched the link between origin of visitor and their socio-economic



status. Visitors to the five parks within 100 km of Melbourne were represented by all socio-economic status classes evenly. Those visiting more remote parks were from higher socio-economic classes. Research by Griffin, Wearing and Archer (2004) supports the notion that there is a lower level of park visitation by people on lower incomes.

According to the ABS report on Household income (2004c), the mean disposable household income in Australia is \$469 per week an increase by 12% since the 1994/95 survey.

Within the same time period “the real mean income of low income people (i.e. the 20% of people with household incomes between the bottom 10% and the bottom 30% of incomes) increased by 8%, from \$227 to \$245 per week...” and “The real mean income of middle income and high income people increased by 12% (from \$497 to \$555 per week) and 14% (from \$792 to \$903 per week) respectively”. (ABS, 2004b).

Couples without children had the highest amount of combined disposable income with \$692 per week. Seniors and single parent families had just under \$330 per week but the distribution of funds varied according to ownership of the household dwelling (ABS, 2004b).

With income levels a consideration, an ABS report investigated the proportion spent on recreation (ABS, 2003a). A 1998-99 survey reported “households in the lowest income quintile spent on average \$32 per week (or 11% of average weekly household expenditure) on recreation, \$52 less than the national average and \$129 less than the \$166 (or 14% of average weekly household expenditure) spent by households in the highest income quintile...” (ABS, 2003a). The report also discussed expenditure on domestic holidays. Low income earners spent only 2% of total expenditure, on domestic holidays, which is four times less than the total expenditure by households in the highest income group (ABS, 2003a).

The average day trip expenditure increased from \$67 to \$81 per trip, an increase of 21% over a two year period. Similarly overnight travel increased by 18% in the same time period with average expenditure per night rising from \$112 to \$132 (Fairweather, 2002). Mercer (1994) suggests that the integration of policies across various disciplines, for example; economic, health and employment should to be considered alongside traditional land use, parks or local government policies.

“At the present time, for example, it is no exaggeration to say that large areas of rural Australia- home to some 5 million people –are in deep economic social crisis. The bottom has fallen out of the market for many of the traditional agricultural products, family farms are being bankrupted on a wide scale, and numerous small county towns are dying” (Mercer, 1994:26).

This is supported by the ABS (2002d) report on population which highlights that the fastest population decline is in regional and rural locations. The ABS (2002d) states, “such population loss is associated with technological, social and economic changes and industry restructuring in local economies”.

The impact drought has had on recreation expenditure is of interest in this thesis. In recent years drought and bushfires have contributed to economic decline for rural Victorians. The Victorian Liberal Party (2003b) report "Farmers are still struggling to recover from what is one of the worst droughts on record and the Federal Government has recently extended interim Exceptional Circumstances (EC) assistance to some Victorian regions". Drought as a constraint will be a probe during the regional focus group discussions.

The Commonwealth of Australia (2003) reports that the tourism industry directly employs 550,000 people and indirectly employs 397,000 people in Australia. Of these 185,000 are employed in regional areas accounting for seven percent employment in the regions “compared to six per cent for tourism nationally” (Commonwealth of Australia 2003:xvi). Tourism Victoria (2005) estimates that the tourism industry employs 61,000 in

regional Victoria. In 2002 “over 70 per cent of domestic and 23 per cent of international tourist nights are spent in regional and rural Australia” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003:xvi). Prosser et al. (2000:4) state “This amounts to a combined estimated total of 60% of all tourism in Australia, excluding day trips”. There is a national increase in the number of short breaks taken and travel is usually on the weekend. With such a high percent of tourism generated in the regional areas, regional Victorians would be needed in their home regions during the preferred seasons and on weekends, particularly if they are employed in the tourism sector. This would limit the opportunity to travel to Melbourne and its parks.

### *Occupational Status*

With links to available time (2.3.4), Bolt (1993, cited in Mercer, 1994:24) reports on longer “working regimes, including weekend work, 12-hour shifts and minimum, 42 hour weeks”. Probert’s study (1993, cited in Mercer, 1994:23) has shown an increase in the number of hours worked from “36.7 hours in 1980, to 40.5 in 1990” and there is also a “large increase in those working more than 49 hours”, 13% in 1983 to 19% in 1984. These averages would need to account for occupation and hierarchal level. The ABS (2003b) report on employee hours specifies between males and females who are in adult, non-managerial, full-time positions. Private sector males worked 41 hours per week, (females 38.5) compared with 38 hours (females 37) for public sector employees (ABS, 2003b). There are more mobile telephones, laptops, modem links and fax machines which blur the distinction between work and home (Mercer, 1994).

According to the ABS (2004c) “characteristics of Australian households are changing over time” and there is an increase in the number of one parent families with dependent children. Many families are working couples and opportunities for outdoor recreation will largely come during holidays and long weekends. There is a need to consider those who work on weekends and families who split the working week to share childcare. Mercer’s (1994) evaluation of Mackay (1994) is that women have moved into the workforce in very large numbers and dual income households are now common. Women can take over

the role of main income earner, are generally staying in the workforce longer and having children later (Mercer, 1994). The influence of the changing working roles for women was noted by the South Australian Tourist Commission (1997) who attributed shorter breaks to women in work.

Research by Brown et al. (2003-2005) supports the dissolution of the traditional roles such as males as the main income earner and women as homemakers. They report that there are changing “perceptions of time pressure [that] are unevenly distributed across different life cycle, employment and occupational groups, [which] are strongly related to marital status and the presence and number of children, and tend to be reported more by women than men” (Brown et al., 2003-2005). In 1997 the ABS conducted a survey which reported the proportion of time spent on daily activities. This is described in this thesis under ‘Available Time’(section 2.3.4) and showed women are spending marginally more time in paid work at the expense of domestic work, leisure, sleep and personal care, while the reverse is true for men (Veal and Lynch, 2001).

Reporting on the link between occupational status and parks in the United Kingdom, a report from the Social Science Research Council (1983) found urban parks attract more children, blue collar workers and those without access to cars. Urban parks attract a wider spectrum of urban visitors than any other outdoor recreation activity or countryside sites. Although urban parks serve those with lower income and less mobility, these user groups have lower than average participation levels.

### *Level of Education*

Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) address a link between income, education and constraints. They find “that the tendency to report the effects of structural constraints increases with income and education; however so does the desire to increase the range of participation” and the “better educated and higher income individuals are subject to fewer or weaker intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints on participation than are their less privileged counterparts” (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991:315). If the hierarchical

model proposed by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) is applied, the better educated individuals will have confronted or negotiated intrapersonal and interpersonal barriers to face structural constraints. This can be applied directly to recreation in natural settings where statistics illustrate a link between awareness, participation and education.

The ABS completed a report in 1996 on the environmental concerns of today's society and the main finding was that younger Australians, and those with higher education qualifications, were the most likely to be concerned about environmental problems (ABS, 2002b). Employed people were more likely to be concerned about environmental problems than the unemployed which may also be a reflection of higher educational qualifications among the employed. The ABS (2002b) state "On the other hand, it may indicate that those without the economic pressures associated with unemployment were better able to 'afford' to be concerned".

The Natural Resources and Environment Committee (1987:77) states "In general, park visitors (in particular National Park visitors) have a relatively high level of education with many holding tertiary qualifications. People working in professional, managerial and highly skilled occupations also tend to be over represented among park visitors".

Research by Byrne (1981, cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987) found that visitors to National Parks are from better educated areas of the community and were aware of the opportunities available. Griffin and Archer (2006) found that people with post secondary qualifications were more likely to visit parks with fewer perceived constraints. In contrast, a recent study of Sydney's metropolitan parks showed there was very little variation in level of education and park visitation (Veal and Dinning, 2003). Education in schools can help children learn to appreciate parks.

### **2.3.10 Pricing of Leisure**

There are only ten metropolitan parks in Victoria that charge an entrance fee and of these six are gardens and the remaining four are special interest attractions including the Mansion at Werribee Park (Parks Victoria, 2002). Gardens, centrally located parks, old, established areas and areas that offer a range of experiences are typically high use areas (Roberts, 1987). Such areas will attract and maintain their popularity so long as they are carefully maintained. Visitors are not usually deterred by the presence of an entrance fee for day visits and the National Park service perceive the collection of fees as beneficial for public relations (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987).

There is some debate as to whether park entry fees can affect the number of park users. In a study of metropolitan parks surrounding Sydney, Roberts (1987), found that low use parks are classified as natural experience parks with associated park opportunities. He found there to be an entrance fee in all but one of the areas that recorded low usage levels which may be a significant constraint. Other important “factors such as location, newly developing facilities, lack of information and size are all likely influencing variables affecting the use of these areas”(Roberts, 1987:41-4).

A study at Lane Cove River State Recreation Area, New South Wales, measured levels of use across the span of a week, where the weekend incurred an entrance fee and weekdays did not. Crabbe (1989) observed that weekend visits lasted longer but weekday visits are more frequent. The weekday users were predominantly mothers or carers of children or workers from nearby offices. Although the study revealed an entrance fee could be introduced at a lower rate than the weekend fee, it also acknowledges the choice of alternative, free municipal parks that may attract parents with young children (Crabbe, 1989).

In return for camping or caravanning fees, visitors expect satisfactory service and quality essential for return visits. A study in Ontario by Murray (1994, cited in Eagles, 1997b), reports that campers are very satisfied with the level of service their park fee funds.

Lowering existing fees will not necessarily increase visitation and is not considered “a critical component of the trip experience” (Eagles, 1997b:89). There is a willingness to pay for expanded levels of services including food, restaurants, shops and rental of equipment (Eagles, 1997b). The DCFL consider it improbable to provide free camping inside parks when there are privately run camping grounds operating outside (cited in Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987).

In contrast, reports from researchers in Australia indicate that the cost associated with camping or renting holiday accommodation constrains those with little discretionary income (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Less affluent groups, who would have once considered caravanning or camping an affordable vacation, can no longer participate (Mercer, 1994). Although it is acknowledged that fees and equipment costs have increased and therefore repositions the affordability of caravanning and camping, it remains a cheaper alternative than most hotel accommodation.

Low income earners have expressed that a lack of money is a barrier to participation in park activities or visitation. Insufficient funds can prevent low income earners from purchasing equipment needed to be inclusive in park activities. There is, however, equipment for hire in the form of bicycles, camping equipment and canoes for example (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). This allows new participants the opportunity to try new experiences without a large outlay. However, hire costs may still be outside of the recreational budget for many people.

### **2.3.11 Seasonality and Climate**

As weather is a daily variable, this literature review took a focus on seasons and climate. While ‘time’ is often listed as a constraint to tourist activity or recreation participation (Barnes, 1989), it is often linked to weather and seasonality when making a decision to travel. There is an increase shift toward short break travel in Australia, Canada and Europe (Hinch and Jackson, 2000). Short break travel in the United Kingdom is usually in spring and autumn and mostly on weekends (Law, 2002) which is similar to the pattern

emerging in Victoria. Regional tourist data provided by Destination Melbourne (2004) indicates that “travel was evenly spread over all season[s], with spring (27%) just edging out the other seasons”. The NRPS in 1991 showed 17% of adult urban park users’ visit in a summer week. Unrecorded dog walking and various outdoor sports could boost this percentage (Veal and Lynch, 2001). Due to Melbourne’s variable climate and distinct seasons, park visitors are influenced by seasonality (Zanon and Frost, 2001).

Easter is a good short break opportunity when the climatic conditions for outside activities are still favourable. Metropolitan parks in Melbourne may not attract visitors as a main activity however shopping is considered an important drawcard. Melbourne is described as “Australia’s shopping capital because of our great range of department stores, designer boutiques and specialty shops” (Liberal Party, 2004a). Acknowledging that this is a political viewpoint, the Victorian Liberal Party suggests opportunities are missed through Easter shopping closures (Liberal Party, 2004a). If Easter trading was tied in more effectively with the reduced price airfares and events that take place during the Easter break it could help make Melbourne yet more popular as a tourist destination.

The tourism strategy from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (2003a) has highlighted a need to promote events in off peak seasons to help increase visitation and the importance of extending the season through a greater use of festivals and events. This is a recommendation also made by Butler and Mao (1997). The 2003 Tourism strategy report also suggests utilising the business market sector to “mitigate the effects of the seasonal nature of tourism” (Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2003a:25). The business sector is less influenced by season and usually occurs on weekdays with its main decline only occurring in peak seasons such as Christmas (Butler and Mao, 1997).

Regional visitors will be experiencing similar seasonal patterns at their home locations so attractive pricing and a diversified marketing strategy will need to be considered. Research conducted in Norway by Haukeland (1990) suggests that ‘social tourism’ programs such as vacation travel funded by the State could be used to overcome



constraints. A State funded incentive in Norway guaranteed farmers could take “a three week holiday during the summer period” ensuring greater equality (Haukeland, 1990:178). Urban centres are believed to have a less seasonal pattern of tourism than rural destinations. However, if an urban destination relies on visitation by regional visitors, who travel according to seasonal fluctuations, this could cause urban areas to be prone to seasonal fluctuations as a direct result (Butler and Mao, 1997).

The months of January and April are the most popular for tourists visiting Victoria from both interstate and intrastate (Tourism Victoria, 2002). Not only can this be attributed to stable weather patterns at these times of year but it is linked to school holidays and major events in Melbourne’s calendar. The ‘temporal perspective’ which includes seasons and periods of time, is a situational variable which has an effect on tourism behaviour (Decrop, 1999b). Travellers are limited by the scheduled school holiday period and paid holiday leave.

Important determinants are described as being ‘institutionalised’ by Butler and Mao (1997) and ‘institutional’ by Hinch and Jackson (2000). Hinch and Jackson (2000:91) describe ‘institutional’ factors as those “typically based on religious, cultural ethnic, social, and economic considerations, epitomised by religious, school and industrial holidays”. One such factor restricting the family market is school holidays. School aged children will affect the time of year a family travels and the length of the school holidays is another restriction. Schools discourage parents from taking children on holiday at the expense of their schooling so often families are restricted to travelling within school holiday periods. The summer school holiday dominates the tourist market globally (Butler and Mao, 1997; Hinch and Jackson, 2000). Public holidays are the most common form of institutionalised seasonality and many of these holidays can be expanded into longer breaks (Butler and Mao, 1997; Fairweather, 2002). Traffic congestion, usually associated with peak holiday times, may significantly increase travel time and may act as a deterrent to park visitation. Weekends provide a flexible alternative to scheduled school holidays. This may contribute to the increase in weekend travel and it may be cheaper to do so.

Short breaks have been attributed to less time available for recreation and travel but a shorter break may be through necessity due to insufficient funds that would be necessary for a longer break. Economic considerations are another ‘institutional’ factor affected by seasonality. Fluctuations in disposable income can be linked to pay periods, end of financial year or tax refunds and post–Christmas bill payment periods (Hinch and Jackson, 2000).

Tourism seasonality influenced by ‘natural’ factors includes the cyclical changes of temperature, precipitation and hours of daylight that occur throughout the year (Hinch and Jackson, 2000). Most people prefer to travel in warm, dry seasons (Butler and Mao, 1997) yet there appears to be little research making any direct links to the weather patterns and its implication of visiting outdoor attractions. Perception of temperatures at a destination will influence travel as much as actual temperature (Hinch and Jackson, 2000). A decline in US National park visitation has been directly related to the weather. Capitol Hill Blue (2003) implies this is the third year of decline in parks and indicates weather as one of the contributing factors for this. This is supported by a report from Canada in which deteriorating weather was considered to be a major factor in reduced visitation to National parks (Government of Nova Scotia, 2000).

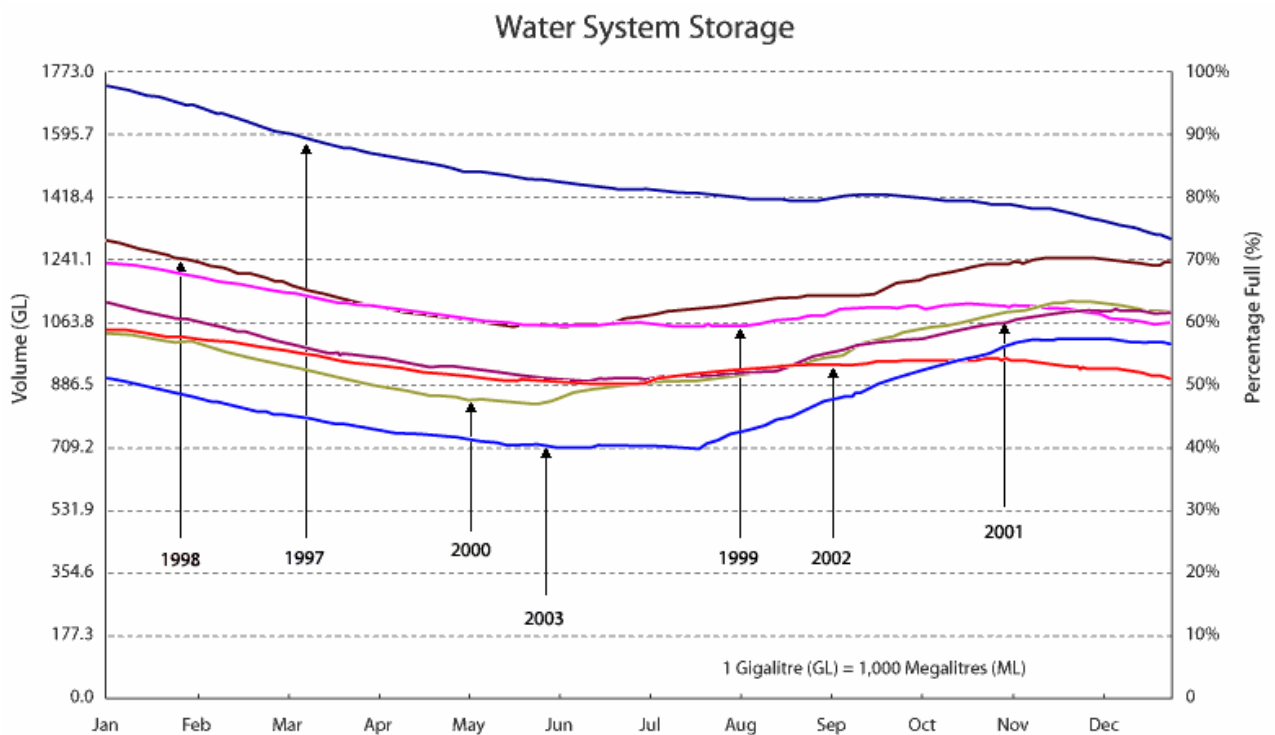
Victoria has been experiencing a slight increase in annual temperatures and reduced rainfall over the last fifty years. This has had a direct impact on water storage levels and resultant drought conditions which have affected regional Victorians. The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) (2003, cited in ABS, 2004c) “defines drought as a prolonged, abnormally dry period when there is not enough water for users’ normal needs, it is not simply an acute shortage of water” and also states that “drought can also be defined by its impacts on primary industries, in particular agriculture”.

As a result of the dryer climatic conditions in 2002, half of Victoria was affected with rainfall deficiency by December 2002. The BOM (2003, cited in ABS, 2004c) suggested that this was among the worst recorded droughts resulting from the warmest maximum

temperatures and the fourth driest year recorded across Australia. The ABS (2004c) states “The rainfall deficiency map produced by BOM (Appendix 6) illustrates the areas and severity of rainfall deficits over the period July 2002 to June 2003”. Many areas, in particular Victoria, experienced the driest periods on record.

As mentioned previously, drought impacts on water storage levels. Figure 2.3 shows the changes that occurred in the water storage capacity of Melbourne Water reservoirs in the period 1997 to 2003. A substantial decrease can be seen between January 1997 where reserves were at approximately 98% and July 2003 where reserves were as low as 40 %.

**Figure 2.3 Melbourne Water Storage Levels, 1997-2003**



Source: Melbourne Water (2006)

As a consequence “water restrictions were also introduced in rural areas and farmers in drought affected regions had their water allocations greatly reduced in the 2002-03 irrigation season” (ABS, 2004c). Falling agricultural production leads to a downward

spiral of effects on dependent industries. The ABS (2004c) states “any reduction in agricultural income can lead to a fall in expenditure by farmers and others who draw an income from these industries”. The people directly associated with primary activities due to a direct result of income loss, will have less disposable income available for tourism. Linked tourism-based industries dependent on local primary produce will consequently suffer diminished returns.

### **2.3.12 Physical Accessibility / Disability**

People with limited mobility or some form of disability may find it difficult to participate in activities in parks. This is supported by Griffin, Wearing and Archer (2004:274) where people perceive “problems for elderly and disabled relatives because of a need to walk long distances from car parks to main sights, activity places and spaces, often on rough paths”. This group includes people with a handicap, language difficulties or people with special needs. Parks Victoria has facilities catering for people with a disability in that 51 Melbourne parks have disabled toilets and 45 have limited mobility access (Parks Victoria, 2002).

Parks Victoria provides accessibility ratings for all their parks ranging from a rating ‘1’ which is the least accessible to a rating ‘6’, “the most accessible sites for those visitors with limited mobility” (Parks Victoria, 2005b). Of the 32 metropolitan parks, eight have a ‘rating 5’, five have a ‘rating 4’ and the remainder have no rating. Potential visitors can access this information from the Parks Victoria Web Page and determine the appropriateness of a park before embarking on their journey. An area for investigation is the condition and appropriateness of facilities and services for people with special needs which encompasses a broad array of disabilities from people requiring wheelchair access to vision impaired visitors (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987).

Transport problems exist for “many disadvantaged groups; including people with disabilities [who] may not have access to private transport” (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987:87). The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources

(2003a) reports significant barriers in relation to tourism opportunities for people with disabilities, their friends and carers. There needs to be a coordinated effort to be more inclusive when marketing towards people with disabilities (Reid, 1980; Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987; Veal and Lynch, 2001). Raymore (2002) highlights 'wellness' as a structural facilitator to leisure. For those people who are disabled or chronically ill, parks and their facilities can be viewed as facilitators for inclusion (Figure 2.1).

### **2.3.13 Race and Ethnicity**

Despite the fact that Melbourne's population is considered multicultural, regional areas have a more dispersed concentration of ethnic groups. Statistics compiled by the 2001 Census indicate that the larger rural cities have more people born in 'Non English Speaking Countries' than in the smaller communities as expected. Greater Shepparton, Mildura, Ballarat and Greater Bendigo all had more than 2000 people born in 'Non English Speaking Countries' representing between 7.1% and 2.5% of each cities total population. Greater Geelong had 17,459 people born in 'Non English Speaking Countries' representing 9.3% of their population (Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs, 2003).

It can be generally assumed that any subculture that develops from the overall fabric within a dominant culture will conform to or adopt many of the norms in that dominant culture (Decrop, 1999b). Differences may develop if the needs of a subculture are not compatible with the norms of the dominant culture (Decrop, 1999b). Raymore (2002) associates peer approval with race. She identifies race as a structural influence in leisure participation.

The Natural Resources and Environment Committee (1987:78) collectively consider Victoria as "a multi-cultural society and, for many cultural groups, interaction with the environment and visits to parks are a natural part of their lifestyle". There is a need to acknowledge ethnic communities as their views may differ. It is believed that Southern

Europeans seek facilities and areas where extended family groups can congregate for picnics and ball games (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). Griffin, Wearing and Archer (2004) discuss the value parks, as public meeting spaces accommodating large gatherings, can provide ethnic communities. There had been limited research on the preferences for ethnic groups and metropolitan wide surveys in Melbourne had shown few distinct differences in attitudes or park usage levels (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987). A study by Vize and Byrne (1990) aimed to make ethnic communities more aware of parks in Victoria. Resultant recommendations by ethnic participants included “provide information days for ethnic community representatives” and “separate information days for specific ethnic groups” (Vize and Byrne, 1990:10).

Mercer (1994) recognises the need for more research targeting specific groups based on age, gender, ethnicity and class, living in a particular geographical zone and the monitoring of certain recreational sites. By providing appropriate marketing and communication for ethnic communities it may help to attract more users to parks and would be equally useful for the international market. Another recommendation is to regularly present promotional material to organisations including ethnic media (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987, Vize and Byrne, 1990).

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has considered: 1) Travel motivation, destination choices and imagery, 2) Market segments and marketing plans, and 3) Decision making processes including constraints and facilitators.

Parks are part of the attractions mix or activity base for the urban tourist. The focus of this thesis is on parks as a marketable commodity and considers market segmentation and appropriate marketing methods.

Once the decision to travel to a destination has been made, activity choice is then affected by a set of integrated variables. In order to address the research problem for this study, it was necessary to investigate the perceived constraints on metropolitan park visitation. It was necessary to prioritise such constraints. This was achieved by reviewing existing quantitative data. This chapter considered 13 important constraints and facilitators.

Individual contexts will have profound influences on 1) the decision to travel and 2) participation in activities. It would be unrealistic to find a solution for all ages and life stages when there is such variety within each dynamic sub group (Raymore, 2002). Jackson (2000:62) supports this by stating that “no constraint is experienced with equal intensity by everyone...” and he suggests that research to date has placed too much importance on participation verses non- participation, there is an over-emphasis on structural constraints and interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints are neglected. What also must be considered is that personal situations change. For example, with the birth of a baby or the loss of employment a new set of facilitators or constraints will affect the decision to travel and participate in a recreational activity. Such personal information can not always be extracted from traditional quantitative studies. Jackson (2000:62) is also concerned with the “over-reliance on quantitative methods of data collection and analysis” and recommends more use of qualitative methods.

The literature highlights links between external information sources from an interpersonal and structural nature and the previous experiences of an individual. This combination of influences aids in the decision to travel and to participate in activities. It is important to determine where potential visitors source their information. This will help determine the level of influence and importance, intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints and facilitators have on a) the decision to travel and b) the formation of an activity agenda.

In determining destination choice, it could be assumed that the majority of regional Victorians would have at least a basic awareness of or some element of previous experience with Melbourne. It is important to seek information from tourists planning on

visiting Melbourne or those who have recently been to Melbourne to gather information on destination image. One objective will be to determine the level of awareness potential visitors have of Melbourne's attractions with specific reference to parks.

Kievet (2001) supports the notion that people need to be encouraged to see the available and often easy options there before them. This raises concerns over the level of awareness a person has of their home region. This thesis views hosts as a crucial influence on the decision to travel to Melbourne, length of stay and choice of activity and this has given rise to the need to sample metropolitan perspectives.

If parks have enough activity choice then they will be able to cater for more life stages. In understanding decisions about park use, there is a need to examine the family's expectations of park activities and the motivation which supports the intended activity. The sample of participants will therefore need to include variation in 'Life Stage'. The literature also suggests women are providing a crucial role in family decision making. Although this will not be a direct line of investigation through questioning, an equal gender divide will be essential in the focus groups.

Gaining opinions from a variety of life stages will necessitate sampling from a variety of age categories. Three broad age categories comprising of seniors (51 years and older), middle aged (35 – 50 years) and young (18-34) will each represent a third of all focus groups in this methodology. Their opinions on perceived activity choice will be of considerable importance.



## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to explore the research questions as presented in chapter one. Chapter two outlined information about motivation and activity participation, specifically relating to parks and the various constraints associated with visitation. This chapter explains the research design, the sampling frame and selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The focus of this research was to identify the reasons that may have caused the decline in visitor numbers to Melbourne's metropolitan parks as identified by Parks Victoria research in the period 2000 to 2003.

The research focus can be investigated by seeking answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the attractiveness of Melbourne as a short break destination for regional Victorians?
- 2) What are the perceived constraints to metropolitan park visitation by regional and metropolitan visitors?
- 3) What awareness do people have of Melbourne's parks? and;
- 4) How can Parks Victoria attract more visitors to their metropolitan parks?

The nature of the research suggests a qualitative technique was most appropriate. Robson (1989:24) describes qualitative research as "small-scale market research, where one interviews the consumer in a detailed and unstructured way about their usage of, attributes, imagery, feelings, values, beliefs and motives related to a particular market". The particular product for this study encompassed Melbourne as a destination and parks as an activity. Through focus group and in-depth interviews, participants explain their consumer and social behaviour addressing the research problem. The merits of a

qualitative approach when studying decision making, tourist behaviour, destination image and activity preferences has been advocated by several tourism researchers. Teare, Mazanec, Crawford-Welch and Calver (1994:40) suggest the gathering of qualitative information is too complex to be tailored to “structured, standardized techniques and criteria of quantitative research”. A qualitative approach allows the participant to inform rather than respond (Riley 1995). For example, in Dann’s (1996) study of destination image, the respondents determined the area of significance through open-ended questions.

Parks Victoria has expressed concern over the lack of use regional Victorians made of its metropolitan parks. A qualitative approach to further investigate the views of regional Victorians was a preferred method so that current known information would be expanded upon, not replicated, in a cost effective manner. A qualitative approach also helped to ascertain regional Victorians decision making qualities, preferred activities and constraints for travelling to both Melbourne and its associated parks.

One aspect of the research was to ascertain what motivates people to travel to Melbourne. In order to increase the number of visitors to parks, it was important to first understand what Melbourne’s perceived attractions were. It was also important to determine the inhibiting factors affecting travel to Melbourne as a destination. Therefore a question about destination choice was important. Once this was established, the study focused on important constraints perceived by the focus group participants.

The qualitative technique allowed for interpretation of the quantitative findings, allowing an in-depth understanding based on the experiences and opinions of the sample (Williamson, 2000). There was a need for a more detailed description of how the key CPM constraints personally affected potential park visitors and how such constraints are interrelated. If there is a sequential process in which to negotiate constraints (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991), a qualitative method would allow a descriptive thought process to evolve. There was an abundance of constraints as outlined in the literature review that could prevent regional Victorians from visiting Melbourne and its

metropolitan parks. The methodology employed in this research aimed to establish not only a comprehensive list of constraints but also to investigate how these constraints simultaneously influence an individual's decision to travel along with the choice of activity upon arrival.

Nine constraint categories are provided in the quantitative data. As the CPM data allowed respondents to nominate more than one constraint, the use of focus group discussions allowed participants to identify any social consequences involved; whether any natural phenomena have affected income or expenditure and whether such constraints have a direct impact on the amount of time regional people can afford to allocate to metropolitan-based leisure activities. It was hoped that by speaking to representatives from regional locations, workable solutions may be put forward to help improve lagging areas of park usage. An open-ended question was created to generate discussion about constraints to park visitation.

Awareness was one of the listed constraints to park visitation. As such, an inventory of marketing activities conducted by Parks Victoria was compiled. This information was collected from Parks Victoria publications and Web Pages. Awareness issues and other constraints listed in the CPM data were used as probes in the interview questions.

The CPM data helped to consolidate many structural constraints including: lack of time, insufficient funds, distance and physical limitations. In a study by Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997) people were shown to be less concerned by structural constraints, placing more emphasis on making the most of the time they have available with their social network of people. Their study also found that people "restructured their days so that they could find time to share with others" and they "compromised on activity for the sake of being with a partner or friend" (Samdahl and Jekubovich, 1997: 448/449). It was therefore deemed important to include the views of the friends and relatives, regional Victorians spend time with once in Melbourne.

The establishment of eight focus groups involved collaboration with the key stakeholders; Parks Victoria, Melbourne City Council and Tourism Victoria. Focus groups were favoured in this study because they provided a good medium in which to not only discover what people have to say, but also to provide an insight “into the sources of complex behaviours and motivations” (Morgan and Krueger, 1993 in Morgan, 1996:139). Echtner and Ritchie (1991:9) recommend focus groups and unstructured methodologies as “conducive to measuring the holistic components of product image and also capturing unique features and auras”. This rationale was adapted by MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997:544) who utilised focus groups to measure “holistic and psychological impressions” of destination image.

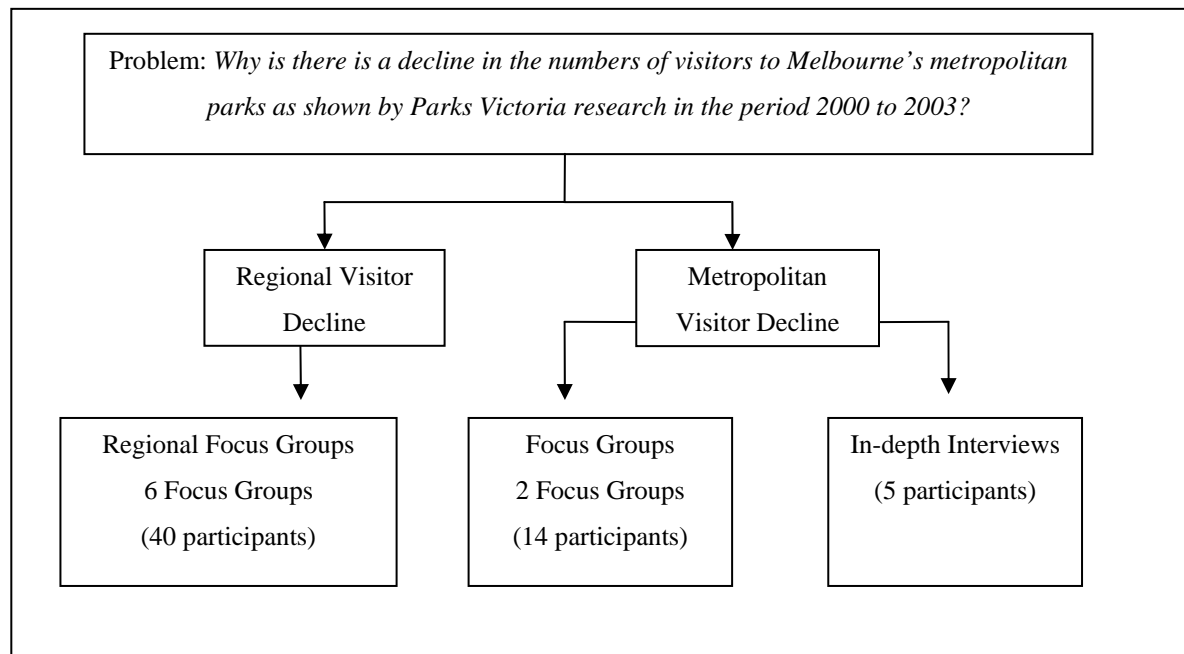
Although focus groups are the main tool for this study, in-depth interviews were incorporated to complement the research design. In-depth interviews were conducted with five metropolitan participants. They provided an opportunity to discuss a decision making sequence. Burns (1989:48) states that “the individual interview enables the researcher to reconstruct the process, step by step, slowly and deliberately, rather like a detective reconstructing the scene of the crime”. Stewart and Stynes (1994) interviewed ‘tourism decision making units’ composed of individuals or as family units. After a brief explanation of the research, the decision makers were uninterrupted when describing their decision process. This would not be possible in a focus group situation where there would be possible interruption from other participants, or the domination of discussion by an individual would force others to become disinterested with the topic. Burns (1989:48) suggests “the task is best achieved, then, without the contamination of responses from other people as would naturally occur in group discussion”.

### **3.3 The Sampling Frame and Selection of Participants**

A total of eight focus groups and five in-depth interviews were constructed in both regional and metropolitan locations, see Figure 3.1. The population for this study included regional Victorians and people from metropolitan Melbourne. Key selection criteria for regional participants were based on whether they had visited Melbourne in the

last twelve months, or planned a visit in the next six months. This study involved 40 regional participants in six focus groups from regional centres throughout Victoria. A total of 19 metropolitan participants were selected for this study. Metropolitan participants needed to host guests from regional Victoria and live within a 50 kilometre radius of Melbourne's CBD.

**Figure: 3.1 Summary of Sampling Frame**



### 3.3.1 Sampling Locations - Regional Focus Groups

The expanse of regional Victoria (227,600 sq km) as a geographical area (See Victoria.com.au, 2005) made focus groups an ideal method of information gathering. Regional participants could gather in a central location to express opinions in an open discussion forum. Focus groups interviews are an effective method to gain a greater understanding of people's perceptions and attitudes. Instead of holding discussion groups once the visitor had arrived in Melbourne, discussions were held in the regional areas. This allowed the inclusion of the less frequent visitors to Melbourne and also captured peoples' views at the beginning of their decision making process.

Through analysing the NVS (2002) database, definitive statistics determined where the regional groups were to be sampled. Locations for regional focus groups were selected based on distance from Melbourne. Larger settlements with respect to population size and current visitation to Melbourne were chosen (refer to Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1      Regional Victorian Visitation to Melbourne 2002**

<b>Top ten Origin Regions</b>	<b>Visitors to Melbourne from regional locations</b>
Gippsland ( <b>Traralgon</b> )	<b>311</b>
<b>Bendigo</b>	<b>202</b>
Geelong	<b>195</b>
Ballarat	<b>194</b>
Western ( <b>Warrnambool</b> )	<b>179</b>
High Country ( <b>Mansfield, Wodonga</b> )	<b>156</b>
Goulburn ( <b>Shepparton</b> )	<b>142</b>
Peninsula	<b>129</b>
Lakes	<b>103</b>
Mallee	<b>101</b>

*Selected locations in **bold***

Source: Adapted from NVS (2002)

The following towns were selected: Bendigo, Mansfield, Shepparton, Traralgon, Warrnambool and Wodonga. These six locations occurred in the top ten sources of regional visitors to Melbourne (Table 3.1). These regional locations were divided into two categories, those with distances greater than 200 kilometres to Melbourne and centres with a distance less than 200 kilometres, (Table 3.2). The aim of this geographical division was to identify origin sources that could be considered ‘close to’ or ‘distant

from' Melbourne, to establish if distance and travel time led to variations in opinions and visiting patterns.

**Table 3.2 Travelling Times and Distance of Regional Locations to Melbourne**

Regional Location		To Melbourne	
		Distance in kilometres	Estimated travel time (minutes)
Locations less than 200 km	Bendigo	150	135
	Traralgon	164	118
	Shepparton	180	125
Locations more than 200 km	Mansfield	253	145
	Warrnambool	261	182
	Wodonga	307	203

Source: Adapted from whereis.com (n.d.); RACV (n.d)

### 3.3.2 Structure and Selection of Regional Focus Groups

A focus group size of six or seven participants was thought to allow a wide enough range of responses without being so large that participants would have a low level of involvement (Greebaum, 1998; Morgan, 1996). The groups were designed to contain as much diversity as possible with respect to **age, education, income level, occupation and gender**. Grouping people with similar demographics could provide advantages with regard to participants experiencing similar circumstances and facilitating discussions, however, segmentation by age or life stage was likely to increase the size of focus groups needed for this study (Morgan, 1996). As a compromise, representation was sought across the age spectrum that included (where possible), two young (18 – 34 years), two middle aged (35 – 50 years) and two senior persons (51 years and older) per group. This age distribution was sampled purposefully to help demonstrate age-defining preferences

with respect to 'life stage'. When considering the construction of the focus groups, too much diversity within the group creates unease whereas, over-familiarity could have affected the synergy of the group (Bruseberg and McDonagh, 2003).

Six regional focus groups were conducted. The number of focus groups was a limiting factor due to budgetary and time constraints imposed by the nature of the project. However, richness of information collected was more important than the number of participants sampled (Decrop, 1999a). The information collected by the 40 regional participants was sufficient and any additional focus groups were not likely to contribute to any new knowledge (Decrop, 1999a; Morgan, 1996).

Potential regional focus group participants were contacted by telephone by Millward Brown personnel. Millward Brown, a market research agency utilised by Parks Victoria, was employed to recruit participants. Potential participants' names were selected from a database held by Millward Brown. This database was composed of people who had previously participated in an unrelated survey and indicated they would be willing to participate in future surveys. Once participants expressed their willingness to attend the focus group, a confirmation letter was sent (Appendix 8).

### **3.3.3 Structure and Selection of Metropolitan Focus Groups**

Friends and relatives accommodate 39% of intrastate visitors (Tourism Victoria, 2002). Given the high importance the influence of family and friends has on visitors to Melbourne, two focus groups comprising of 14 people, who had hosted regional visitors, were organised within the metropolitan boundary. The aim was to collect information on awareness of metropolitan parks and activity choice of the Melbourne hosts who are in a position to act as 'interpersonal facilitators' to leisure participation. Raymore (2002:38) suggests that "facilitators to leisure are factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation".



The metropolitan age categories and numbers of participants remained consistent with the selection method utilised for the six regional focus groups.

**Focus group one:** included three young (18-39), one middle aged (40-50) and three senior persons (51 plus).

**Focus group two:** included three young (18-39), two middle aged (40-50) and two senior persons (51 plus).

The groups contained a maximum number of seven to remain consistent with the regional groups.

Recruitment of metropolitan participants was facilitated through an advertisement in two La Trobe University staff and student publications. The La Trobe *Uni News* publication reaches 2700 (excluding casual staff) members of staff from all Victorian campuses. The *Rat Sheet* daily publication circulates to 17,000 Bundoora campus students. Both publications are also available on the La Trobe University Web Site so can be accessed by considerably more people than just Bundoora staff/students. Figure 3.2 is an example of the advertisement that appeared in the university newsletters. The advertisement was placed in the *Uni News* over a two week period and appeared in the *Rat Sheet* daily for one week. All potential participants responded to the *Uni News* advertisement.

A screening question within the advertisement ensured all participants were hosts for domestic visitors: *Do you accommodate friends and relatives when they visit Melbourne?* (Figure 3.2). This ensured that all of the participants had a valid input into the themes associated with hosts. Questions followed a similar format to the regional focus groups (Appendix 7) although incorporated more emphasis on their recommendations as hosts (Appendix 9).

**Figure 3.2 Sample of Advertisement Calling for Metropolitan Participants**

**Volunteers needed for focus group**

*Do you accommodate your friends and relatives when they visit Melbourne?*

Sharyn McDonald (School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management, La Trobe University) in association with Parks Victoria is looking for friends and relatives of regional Victorians to discuss their experience as hosts. Group discussions will be held at Bundoora campus in October for no longer than 2 hours.

- Each person will receive 2 adult cinema tickets
- Refreshments provided

If you are interested, I would be delighted to hear from you via email

[Sharyn.mcdonald@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:Sharyn.mcdonald@latrobe.edu.au) or

Telephone 9479 3770 (School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management Office)

All your details will be received in confidence.

Source: Adapted from Bruseberg and McDonagh (2003)

Focus groups were established with a view to developing strategies for increasing visitation from regional Victorians in metropolitan parks. Direct input from regional Victorians was aimed at providing information regarding perceived constraints, which could result in some immediate solutions or to identify areas for improvement.

### **3.3.4 Structure and Selection of In-depth Interviews**

In addition to the eight focus groups, five in-depth interviews were conducted with metropolitan participants. Participants responded to the same metropolitan focus group advertisement and were chosen using the same filter question. In choosing in-depth

participants, occupation was another important criterion. An effort was made to recruit a sample of people who were employed (past or present) in an information providing role. As such, in-depth participants represented a range of information provision industries including hospitality, airport services, and education. Employment in industries such as those listed provides an opportunity to impart information to a broader audience on a regular basis. This potentially positioned these individuals as having a good knowledge of Melbourne's attractions. Additionally, in-depth participants' proximity to parks was recorded. Those with an abundance of parks in their municipality may have an enhanced awareness of local parks. The reason for including in-depth interviews was to allow participants to contribute in a conversational format, unhindered. Each participant received the same (host) questions.

### **3.4 Instrumentation**

Two data collection instruments were developed for the study (as shown in Appendix 7 and 9). A structured interview designed for regional participants and a modified version for metropolitan participants. The questions were formulated to generate a simulated decision making process for travel, the associated constraints and the preferred activities. The constraints that were discussed in the focus groups were primarily structural constraints. Interpersonal constraints and facilitators were included in the investigation. It was assumed that information affecting an individual on an intrapersonal level would be too personal and would be better suited to an approach such as a diary recording process.

It was anticipated that the constraints discussed in the focus groups would be broad enough to affect most participants. Ideally, the constraints discussed would be those whereby people are able to adopt a strategy thereby modifying their leisure or altering another aspect of their lives (Jackson, 2000). Questions and probes were grouped under general themes:

- a) Awareness/Interest in Melbourne
- b) Constraints and Competition for Melbourne Visits
- c) Preferred Type of Visit and Activities

Structured questions were based on the key themes based around the CPM framework (refer to Appendix 7 and 9). These themes were used to initiate focus group discussions and also to thematically analyse the findings. In order to increase park visitor numbers, it was necessary to understand what the perceived attractions in Melbourne were and the medium by which potential visitors sourced their information. Although the process of ‘emergence’ has the advantage of improved questions or ideas for subsequent focus groups; the questions remained standardised for all six regional focus groups (Morgan, 1996). This enabled a high degree of direct comparison across the groups.

Participants were given writing materials to enable them to make notes if they wished to do so. The first question, the *warm up* question, was designed to relax participants into the discussion by identifying their ‘ideal short break’ destination. This question was beneficial in identifying Melbourne’s competitive position and prompted participants to classify the ‘pull’ factors associated with Melbourne as compared to another favoured destination if they had one. Such ‘pull’ factors were revealed in *question ‘A’*.

The second, open-ended question, *question ‘A’*, was designed to gather information about the functional destination image of Melbourne’s attractions mix. Participants were given the opportunity to think freely about the positive imagery they held for Melbourne. This provided a comprehensive listing of ‘pull’ factors associated with the metropolitan area. It also allowed the researcher to group attractions and identify what mix of attractions visitors are willing to combine on a short break to Melbourne.

By the very nature of allowing participants to discuss perceived constraints in the next question, *question ‘B’*, underlying psychological components of destination image were collectively obtained. Participants were free to discuss their overall impression of Melbourne allowing for their descriptions of Melbourne’s atmosphere and mood.

The fourth question, *question ‘C’*, **prioritised** Melbourne’s ‘pull’ factors and allowed participants to highlight what they perceive to be Melbourne’s strengths as a destination.

This question allowed extension into visitor expectations and experiences in metropolitan parks and the level of priority such attractions receive.

The moderator used a 'moderator's guide' prior to the focus group formation and asked specific, standardised, open questions (Appendix 7 and 9). The moderator also had a set of prompts should the initial question provoke less than the desired level of input and detail from the participants. This technique enabled the moderator to remain in control of group dynamics whilst drawing out a variety of responses from all present, ensuring all opinions were included. It also allowed a high degree of direct comparison across the groups (Morgan, 1996).

The moderator was skilful in drawing out responses from the quieter participants and asked follow up questions where more detail was required. An audio recorder was used and the moderator noted body language including smiles, frowns, nodding and shaking of people's heads. Focus group responses were transcribed within two weeks of the discussions. This allowed the moderator the opportunity to clarify the responses and make distinctions based on the age and gender of the response as well as any body language that may have accompanied the themes under discussion.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures**

#### **3.5.1 Regional Participants**

The focus groups were conducted in November 2004, over a two week period. The remittance for regional participants to participate in the focus groups, taking into consideration the distance and time individuals needed to travel to attend the venue, was \$70. The focus groups were held at 7 pm for two hours duration. This time of day was selected to accommodate the maximum variety of participants. Barrett and Herriotts (2003) highlight an important consideration with regard to the time length of focus groups. They question the ability to focus and sustain attention during focus groups, with particular concern for those who are senior aged. Venues for example, were selected to

provide a quiet, relaxed and comfortable environment creating an atmosphere conducive for informal discussions. Refreshments were provided and utilised during a break within the allotted two hour time frame.

Ethical considerations deemed important for this study included 'voluntary participation without coercion' and 'confidentiality of information'. Due to lengthy delays in ethics approval regarding the remittance regional participants should receive and the selection process desired by the partner organisations, very little time was left available in which to assemble the focus groups within the limited timeframe. Millward Brown was given a two week time frame to recruit participants and assemble the six focus groups. Ideally, age ranges would have been in line with those of the CPM or the NVS but the age ranges were kept broad in view of the deadline. All participants were provided with an information sheet and an informed consent signature was obtained. As such participants approved the taping of interviews and their confidentiality was assured.

### **3.5.2 Metropolitan Participants**

The focus groups were held in October 2004, one at 1 pm and the other at 6:30 pm on week days. They were both hosted at La Trobe University's, Bundoora campus. Remittance offered for participation was less than the regional focus groups as the distance to attend the venue is reduced. The participants were offered two cinema tickets. Refreshments were also provided.

### **3.5.3 In-depth interviews**

Five in-depth interview participants answered the same focus group advertisement (Figure 3.2). The participants provided the moderator with suitable times and locations in which they could participate. They were advised that the interview would last approximately one hour. The in-depth interviews were conducted over the 2004/05 summer months. The interview process allowed the interviewee to lead the conversation

with only occasional probes from the moderator. This allowed a descriptive account of their decision making process with regard to leisure activities.

## **3.6 Data Analysis**

This section outlines the procedure used to transcribe the data prior to its analysis in addressing the research question.

### **3.6.1 Analysis Strategy**

#### *Quantitative results*

The age of each participant was recorded and tabulated to establish the age variation within the groups. The number of visits to Melbourne by regional participants was also recorded for each person. The mean total for each group was utilised in a Spearman Rank correlation. This tested the relationship between distance and travelling time against the frequency of visits to Melbourne. Type of accommodation utilised by regional participants was also recorded and tabulated. Metropolitan participants were tabulated according to age and suburb of origin.

#### *Qualitative results*

The information gathered progressed from a limited amount of quantitative data, to rich, qualitative data where participants inform the study rather than respond. Interviews were audio taped and thorough summaries were made of the answers to each question as well as the gender of each response being recorded. This resulted in six separate regional transcripts along with seven metropolitan transcripts formatted into Word-based text files.

The structured questions and associated probes had been carefully considered to aid in content analysis. The quantitative results of the CPM database were used to establish topics for discussion with selected focus groups and in-depth interviewees. The CPM data

were used to rank the most important constraints (Table 1.2) which were developed into key themes for qualitative investigation. Thirteen provisional core codes were established prior to data collection and were based on the nine CPM responses, research questions and constraints theory incorporated into the study (Appendix 10).

Incorporating the ‘rules of thumb’ as discussed by Strauss (1987) the following steps were taken to analyse the data. The analysis was constantly looking “for what appears to be the main concern of or problem for the people in the setting” (Strauss, 1987:35). With the general research question in mind, the transcripts were read for clarity and the dominant concepts were noted. Paragraphs were coded with core themes as shown in Figure 3.3. Core themes or categories based on CPM responses (Appendix 10) were highlighted and referenced. If the codes accumulated too much data, they were broken down into sub codes. New categories and subcategories were developed and relationships between categories or subcategories were referenced by page, quote and code. Categories and responses were constantly compared using memos to link ideas. ‘Available time’ for example had relationships with ‘distance’, ‘awareness’ and ‘influence of family and friends’. The relatively unrelated minor categories and those codes that achieved limited or no response were disregarded as irrelevant.

**Figure 3.3      Extract from Interview Transcript**

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Code</b> (second stage coding)
Moderator	“If your guests were coming to Melbourne on a ‘short break’ what would you suggest they do?”	
Interviewee	Type of visit really depends on my guests. The number of guests and whether there are children involved will determine my recommendation. The age of the guests and there preference of transport determines the type of park. The amount of time they wish to spend on an activity will also determine my suggestion.	<b>Age and life stage</b> (Youth) <b>Transport</b> <b>Available time</b> (Time for unplanned activities)



An example of the coding process is shown in Figure 3.3. In the first stage of coding, 'available time' was recorded where found in all of the transcripts. During the second stage of coding, sub codes were created. For example, 'available time' in its dominance as a core theme, could be divided into three aspects, 'work' commitments, 'family' commitments and 'time for unplanned activities'. Once the data had been coded with sub codes, memos were made to help link themes, thus providing meaning to the relationships.

The responses for question 'A' and 'C' were replicated with regard to named activities and attractions.

Question A *"Either, when you last had a 'short stay visit' (3 days/2 nights) to Melbourne what did you do and where did you stay? OR if you were planning a short stay visit what would you consider doing and where would you stay?"*

Question C *"If you were going to Melbourne on a short visit what would you like to do?"*

As a result, the responses were tabulated into a comprehensive list of all attractions and activities participants have done or would like to do. The responses from each focus group or in-depth interview were transcribed into a separate list before being pooled into one combined list.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter described the methodology used to explore the research question, explained the choice of the sampling locations, structure and selection of focus groups and the content for the discussion questions. Eight focus groups and five in-depth interviews were organised to gather detailed information about the constraints and facilitators to visiting metropolitan parks in Melbourne. In addition, desk research was conducted to ascertain the current marketing and promotion strategies adopted by Parks Victoria. The following chapter presents the results within the key themes.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter two identified a range of constraints and facilitators affecting activity participation. Chapter three described the transition process from identifying gaps in the literature to develop the most appropriate research methodology to answer the research problem. This chapter provides detailed results from the qualitative methodology that was adopted. Results were divided into regional and metropolitan perspectives. Where differences occurred between gender, age or life stage, these were identified and described.

#### 4.1.1 Regional Participants

There were 22 females and 18 males represented in the focus groups as displayed in Table 4.1. Occupations were not formally disclosed but the ensuing conversations revealed a cross-section of occupations ranging from fisherman to solicitor.

**Table 4.1 Age Representation of Focus Group Participants**

<b>Regional Location</b>	<i>Age (years)</i>		
	<i>18 – 34</i>	<i>35 – 50</i>	<i>51 plus</i>
Bendigo	2	3	2
Traralgon	3	2	1
Shepparton	2	2	3
Mansfield	2	3	2
Warrnambool	1	2	3
Wodonga	2	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

*n=40*

One of the probes relating to the research project sought confirmation of the participants' use of Melbourne as a short stay destination. It asked '*How many times have you visited Melbourne in the last 12 months?*' All the participants indicated they had been to Melbourne within the past 12 months on such a visit, and there was a wide range of responses (Table 4.2). One of the 40 participants was not included in the table because he was a university student who was co-habiting in Melbourne and Warrnambool. The range of visits for the remainder was 1 – 40 per year, with the higher numbers being related to family visits.

**Table 4.2      Short Break Visits to Melbourne in the last 12 Months**

<i><b>Trips to Melbourne in last 12 months:</b></i>	<i><b>Lowest</b></i>	<i><b>Highest</b></i>
Bendigo	<i>1</i>	<i>20</i>
Mansfield	<i>4</i>	<i>40</i>
Shepparton	<i>1</i>	<i>12</i>
Traralgon	<i>5</i>	<i>25</i>
Warrnambool *	<i>2</i>	<i>38</i>
Wodonga	<i>1</i>	<i>15</i>

*n* = 39\*

(\*One participant from Warrnambool lived in Melbourne during University semesters estimated 7/8<sup>th</sup> of the year spent in Melbourne.)

When asked, '*When was your last short visit to Melbourne*' and '*Where did you stay?*' the use of hotels was the most popular (38%), followed by staying with friends and family (28%), shown in Table 4.3. In most of the 11 VFR instances, the primary reason for visiting Melbourne was to spend time with family and or friends.

**Table 4.3      Short Break Accommodation Whilst in Melbourne**

<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>Number of people</i>
Staying with Friends and relatives	11
Hotels	15
Both of the above	4
Other	2
Unsure	8

*n= 40*

Budgetary constraints included choice of accommodation. Those who sought hotel accommodation implied there was a lack of quality budget accommodation close to the city. A *Mansfield* participant highlighted that people who go to a specific event will want cheaper accommodation:

*“Past promotions have aimed for an image - Melbourne is a sophisticated place, with high quality hotels, but that is not particularly appealing. People go to a specific event, for example, sport or cultural activities and those attracted to an event will want cheaper accommodation. [They] do not care about sophistication of accommodation or eateries which become a secondary focus.”*

They felt that people are price conscious and are less interested in images of sophistication. Only two participants of the 15 who utilised hotel accommodation stayed in luxury hotels and in one instance the participant reduced the length of stay to one night in order to gain quality. The other participant usually stayed in budget accommodation but the last short break was a gift.

#### **4.1.2      Metropolitan Focus Group Participants**

There were 11 females and three males represented in the metropolitan focus groups. Participants represented a cross-section of occupations ranging from tertiary students and

local government representatives through to home workers. The age of participants was consistent with the regional focus groups and there was representation across the three age brackets as shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 Metropolitan Focus Groups: Age of Participants**

<b>Focus group</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>		
	<i>18 – 34</i>	<i>35 – 50</i>	<i>51 plus</i>
One	3	1	3
Two	3	2	2
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>6</i></b>	<b><i>4</i></b>	<b><i>5</i></b>

*n*= 14

This study noted the suburbs participants were from in order to establish the density of parks in their home locations to see whether this may have had a bearing on visitation. Table 4.5 shows the broad array of areas the participants live in.

**Table 4.5      Origin of Metropolitan Participants**

<i>Suburb</i>	<i>Focus group one</i>	<i>Focus group two</i>	<i>In-depth Interviews</i>
Carnegie		1	
East Brighton			1
Eltham		1	3
Mill Park		1	
Mitcham	2		
Montmorency	1	1	
North Fitzroy		1	1
Northcote	1		
Preston		2	
Reservoir	1		
Templestowe	1		
Thornbury	1		

*n = 19*

#### **4.1.3      In-depth Interviews**

Of the five participants who were interviewed, three lived in the council district of Nillumbik (Table 4.5). This provided an opportunity to see if proximity to parks increased the likelihood of improved awareness of parks in their local area and whether this had an impact on where they would suggest their guests spend their time. Females made up four of the five in-depth participants.

#### **4.2          Responses to themes**

The qualitative data was transcribed and analysed resulting in four collective themes; ‘Time and Distance’, ‘Alternative leisure activities’, ‘Awareness’ and ‘Transport’. The

participants' narration and experiences have been recorded and interwoven relationships amongst these dimensions have been established. Due to the similarities of opinion amongst metropolitan focus group participants and in-depth interviewees, the analysis and discussion for all 19 participants was combined under the heading 'Metropolitan Participants' to avoid replication.

#### **4.2.1 Time and Distance**

Time and distance when travelling to Melbourne were regarded as major constraints by all participants. Availability of time includes: length of time available for a short break to Melbourne, the time of year such breaks are scheduled, work and/or family commitments, time spent on activities and free time available. Distance was a core theme, whereby regional participants discussed predominantly how long it took to travel to Melbourne. This included discussion on the frequency of visits to Melbourne.

#### **Regional Participants**

Time and distance were considered the major constraints by most participants in all six regional focus groups. Available time and the expenses involved were factors applicable to everyone. Most regional participants stated they normally had a pre-determined agenda prior to departure. They felt that during any visit to Melbourne, they would only have a limited amount of time that would be free to pursue unplanned activities. This is when they may rely on the local knowledge of their friends or relatives. Several participants suggested they may have only two hours of unplanned, available time, indicating the limited time such visits involve. One *Bendigo* participant stated “*you go to Melbourne for other reasons; you don't want to waste an hour at a park*”.

Available time to visit Melbourne was mentioned as another important issue, given that many participants were employed full time or had family commitments, therefore reducing leisure time available. Members of the *Shepparton* group expressed the difficulties faced when families tried to coordinate simultaneous free time in order to visit

Melbourne. One participant from *Shepparton* suggested that a combination of “*cost, time, [her] teenage daughter works on the weekends plus [coordination with] older children [requires] organisation for all to take the same time off*”. This was also discussed by *Bendigo* participants who envisaged having more time for travel in the future once family commitments, such as having young dependent children, were not as restrictive. *Mansfield* participants highlighted that those involved in the tourism/hospitality industry or those who own their own business were particularly limited in the times of year or days of the week they could travel to Melbourne.

Another issue raised by a *Mansfield* participant involved farming commitments: “*[there are a] number of animals that need to be fed that we can’t leave for eight months of the year. We would go on a day trip to prevent an overnight stop. In that time of year you virtually can not go at all because you have to be back to feed them.*”

When a Spearman rank correlation test was applied to ‘travel time’ and ‘frequency of visits’ to Melbourne, there was no significant relationship  $R_s = -0.11$ , ( $N=6$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) (refer to Appendix 11).

**Distance** was highlighted as a constraint by the majority of participants, particularly when combined with travelling times and available time for a short break. Most participants used private transport to travel to Melbourne and considered rising fuel costs to be a growing factor limiting their visitations to the state capital. In terms of constraints, it was anticipated that closer proximity to Melbourne would reduce the impact of time and cost constraints, however, this did not eventuate. Variation between regional centres was minimal.

Distances travelled to reach Melbourne varied from *Wodonga* at 307 kilometres to *Bendigo* at 150 kilometres. The constraints discussed were similar, as was the number of visits participants made to Melbourne in the last 12 months, shown in Table 4.6. Distance was not an indication of the number of trips taken. In fact, those with a shorter distance to



Melbourne made fewer visits. For example, *Shepparton* participants, at a distance of 180 kilometres from Melbourne (Table 3.2), averaged three visits to Melbourne per year as compared to *Mansfield* participants, at a distance of 253 kilometres from Melbourne, averaging 17 visits per year. When a Spearman rank correlation test was applied to ‘distance’ and the relationship to mean ‘number of trips’ to Melbourne, there was no significant relationship between distance and visitation rates  $R_s = -0.23$ , ( $N=6$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) (refer to Appendix 12).

**Table 4.6: Average Short Break Visits to Melbourne in the Last 12 Months**

<i>Regional Location</i>		<i>Total number of trips</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Total trips per year</i>
Destinations greater than 200 km	<b>Wodonga</b>	55	8	12
	<b>Warrnambool</b>	62	12	
	<b>Mansfield</b>	120	17	
Destinations less than 200 km	<b>Shepparton</b>	22	3	9
	<b>Traralgon</b>	84	15	
	<b>Bendigo</b>	72	12	
Totals for all locations		<b>415</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>11</b>

*n* = 39\*

(\*One participant from Warrnambool lived in Melbourne during University semesters estimated 7/8<sup>th</sup> of the year spent in Melbourne.)

Although the moderator defined a short break as an overnight stay whilst in Melbourne, some participants blur the distinction between work and recreation. The frequency of visits as described by some participants included the whole family however, one of the family members conducted work for one of the two days, or half a day, as part of the stay. They still regarded this as a short break but sought the opportunity to conduct business. If the short break definition excluded any attachment to work related visitation this may have altered the outcome.

### *Road Networks*

The distance and the length of travelling time to get to Melbourne were given special attention by the *Warrnambool* participants. They deemed the distance to be long and the current traffic congestion issues at Geelong were off putting. Participants felt that once they reached outer Melbourne, there is often considerable additional time required in order to reach their final destination within the CBD. Participants from this group also noted the poor state of the Princes Highway and felt this was one of the biggest drawbacks hindering travel to Melbourne. When discussing their alternative route, along the Great Ocean Road, they felt this was not only further, but too winding. This added considerable travel time to their journey and made passengers travel sick. Three participants suggested the route north as an alternative feeling it was a better quality road (B140 or via A8).

*Shepparton* participants highlighted areas they would prefer to travel to for a short relaxing break. They felt they were in a privileged location to be able to travel under 150 kilometres in any direction and be able to gain varied holiday experiences. Such places included: Bendigo, Ballarat, Daylesford and Mansfield. Several *Warrnambool* participants considered Melbourne visits to be an essential trip and the journey needs to be made regardless of road route chosen. However five participants agreed that should they be seeking a relaxing break they would prefer to spend the same travelling time (182 minutes) in a westwards direction or travel to Torquay or Lorne. Similar distance concerns were expressed by participants in *Wodonga*.

### **Metropolitan Participants**

Metropolitan focus group participants felt that visiting a park would not be a priority for their regional guests and would not consider this a suitable recommendation. All participants perceived there were specific reasons their regional guests would be visiting Melbourne leaving minimal available time. This ranged from spending time with friends or family to attending an event. One of the principal reasons for visiting was shopping.

One participant suggested, “*the urban development in the city is very popular and (regional) people want to see this*”. Metropolitan hosts agreed with the regional participants’ estimates regarding the small amount of free time they anticipated their visitors would have.

Many in-depth responses were consistent with the findings of the two metropolitan focus groups. Available time was again a prime constraint for park visitation. These participants believed that their visiting guests generally arrived with a pre-determined agenda. Three participants felt that suggesting a visit to a park would not be an appropriate use of free time for their visiting guests. Their perception, as hosts, would be to recommend city-based attractions not otherwise found in their guest’s home regional area. However, it was found that interviewees did feel that many of Victoria’s regional centres, particularly *Bendigo*, are well resourced and this has lessened the need to visit Melbourne as frequently. Alternatively, visiting guests have shifted agendas to a more event-based focus such as Australian Football League (AFL) or flower show visits. Similar to the suggestions made by the focus group participants, in-depth participants would ascertain what may have changed in Melbourne since their guests’ last visit. To maximise the outcomes of the visit, they would direct their guests to such new developments or changes, for example, the Docklands or the Queen Victoria Centre. Again this maximises the outcomes of the visit.

It is assumed that guests have come to Melbourne for a very specific reason or set of reasons. However, there is flexibility and some element of available free time. One participant suggested that her guests’ main agenda item was to ‘visit people’. Once in Melbourne guests would phone friends and relatives to see who would be available for a visit. Therefore the agenda evolved from the point of contact once they arrived in Melbourne.

Visiting Melbourne during school holiday periods varied between participants. There was evidence that some guests visited during holidays because of their own children or to visit school aged grandchildren. Others stated that their guests avoided school holidays to be

able to enjoy the attractions without the crowds and traffic. This varied according to life stage. Participants with children generally conformed to visiting during school holidays.

Of the five in-depth participants who were interviewed, three lived in the metropolitan Shire of Nillumbik. This provided an ideal opportunity to see if proximity to parks increased the likelihood of visitation or improved awareness of parks in their local area and whether this had an impact on where they would suggest their guests spend their time.

**Figure 4.1 Park Locations Identified by In-depth Interview Participants**



Source: Adapted from Parks Victoria (2002)

Two Parks Victoria parks were favoured by Nillumbik residents: Westerfolds Park and Warrandyte State Park (Figure 4.1). Westerfolds Park received more discussion for it had more variety, for example, coffee shop, parking, trails and playground. Three other parks were mentioned, Eltham North Reserve, Eltham Lower Park and Alistair Knox Park. All three parks are managed by the Nillumbik Shire Council and all three have a variety of attractions including, playgrounds, open fields, sealed paths and water features with

Eltham Lower Park having the added attraction of a miniature railway. The park however, did not need to be in the participant's municipality for it to be considered. Although not managed by Parks Victoria, Hays Paddock (Kew) (Figure 4.1) was mentioned as a preferred park by four of the five participants interviewed. Although participants were aware of parks outside their municipality, this did not confirm they had a broad awareness or knowledge beyond their municipality. It did suggest that if a park received positive feedback regardless of its location, people were willing to travel and experience it for themselves.

All participants throughout the study believed a pre-determined activity agenda was the norm, indicating prior planning for the visit. With minimal available time identified, visitors to Melbourne sought advice from their accommodation providers to maximise their time. Metropolitan participants discussed the use of their guest's time and considered the amount of available time to include a park visit. Participants with families regarded park visitation as an option and were therefore more likely to recommend this to visitors. Seasonality affected travel periods which varied between those at different life stages. Travel predominantly took place in school holidays if guests had school aged children. Other popular travel times include public holidays or weekends but often corresponded with major events such as AFL finals or the Royal Show.

#### **4.2.2 Alternative Leisure Activities (Attractions Mix)**

Participants highlighted activities and opportunities available in Melbourne. The priorities included visiting friends and family, shopping, eating out and sightseeing. Overall, parks were considered of limited value or importance and were not part of the competitive mix of attractions.

## *Competitive Destinations*

### **Regional Participants**

Used as a warm up question, participants identified where they would choose to go on an **ideal short break**, defined as a three day/ two night visit. This was selected to put the participants at ease and in the mood for the remainder of the session. As would be expected, Melbourne was not the only destination selected, and for the spring/summer period the most favoured destination was the coast (Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7      Ideal Destination for a Short Break**

Location:	Number of people:
<i>Melbourne</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Coastal</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Sydney</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Did not specify</i>	<i>9</i>

*n = 40*

### *Short Break Preferences*

Preferred short break locations differed according to the focus group participant's regional origin. As such their preferences have been discussed separately.

#### *Bendigo*

Only one person identified Melbourne as their preferred short break destination. Two participants chose Sydney and three a coastal destination. In this group, the Great Ocean Road was a specified coastal destination. To some extent this reinforces the finding that 'distance-decay' effect is not a strong factor. The 'distance-decay' effect assumes that the number of visitors will decrease as the distance between a destination and the travellers

origin is increased, due “to higher transportation costs and longer travel times” (Weaver and Lawton, 2002:98). One participant did not specify a location but felt an ideal short break would involve family-friendly activities for young children. This supports the notion of interpersonal influences.

#### *Mansfield*

All participants in this group chose coastal areas for their ideal getaway. The Great Ocean Road, Lakes Entrance, Lorne, Torquay and Sorrento were the locations identified. This provides a contrast to their local environment.

#### *Shepparton*

One person identified Melbourne as their ideal short break. Three participants chose coastal locations including Phillip Island, Warrnambool including the Great Ocean Road and the Gold Coast. Again, this suggests participants are seeking a contrast to their local environment. Two participants selected holidays based on other factors, such as, to spend time with friends in a non specific location and the other desired themed breaks or something new, possibly Perth.

#### *Traralgon*

Only one person from this group chose Melbourne, one specified the Grampians and the remainder chose coastal locations including: Lakes Entrance and The Great Ocean Road.

#### *Warrnambool*

Three participants would choose to go to Melbourne for a short break with the remaining three preferring a coastal getaway. Coastal locations named included Robe in S.A and Wilson’s Promontory.

#### *Wodonga*

Participants in this location were divided into those choosing Melbourne as a preferred short break destination and those who would prefer a coastal break. Warrnambool was

specifically mentioned as a coastal destination. One person considered Sydney as their ideal short break location.

### *Activities*

In most instances the results of the focus groups are compatible with the statistics produced by Tourism Victoria (2002). This includes where participants stay, how they travel to Melbourne and the activities they participate in whilst in Melbourne. When considering the activities that visitors prioritise in their short time frame, park visitation is considerably low, about 2% (NVS, 2002). These findings were confirmed in the focus group interviews.

Regional participants were asked “*What activities are the priorities (when in Melbourne)?*” and “*If you were going to Melbourne on a ‘short break’ what would you like to do?*” Metropolitan participants were asked “*If you had guests staying at your home for a ‘short break’ involving an overnight stay, where would you go and what would you do (or suggest your guest do)?*” These questions allowed regional and metropolitan participants to share information on locations and activities they prefer to visit. Upon analysis of the results, a list of activities and locations was compiled including both regional and metropolitan responses (Table 4.8). It was difficult to tally the numbers of people who have attended these destinations for many participants used non verbal communication to agree with the activities verbalised.



**Table 4.8 Master List of Attractions in Melbourne and Suburbs**

<i>Attractions in Melbourne:</i>		
<b>Albert Park</b>	Film Festivals	Races
Arts centre	Fitzroy gardens	Restaurants and Cafes
Art Galleries	Fitzroy Street	Rialto Tower
Birrarung Marr	General sight seeing	St Kilda
Brunswick Street	<b>Herring Island Environmental Sculpture Park</b>	Shopping
Botanical Gardens	IMAX	Smith Street Collingswood (shopping)
Casino and surrounding stores	Luna Park	South Melbourne
Cinema	Lygon Street	Southbank
Circle tram	Melbourne Aquarium	Specialty shops
Concerts	Melbourne Zoo	Studley Park Boat House
Docklands	Musical Shows	Telstra Dome for a big football game.
Events for example: Boat show, Tennis, Grand Prix	Myers Windows	Theatre
Exhibition centre	Night Clubs	<b>Yarra Bend Park</b>
Fairfield Boathouse	Old Buildings eg State Library	Yarra River Bike rides
Federation Square	Polly Woodside	<b>Yarra River</b> cruises
Ferry to Williamstown	Port Melbourne Yacht Club	Victoria market
<i>Attractions beyond Melbourne:</i>		
Canterbury shopping strip	Hays Paddock Playground	Puffing Billy
Caribbean gardens market	Healesville	Rowville ( kids entertainment factory)
Carnegie ( Packer Park)	Lilydale	<b>William Ricketts Sanctuary</b>
Chadstone Shopping Centre	Moonee Ponds: Queens Park	Sorrento/Mornington –fishing
Chapel Street	Mornington – charter	Southlands
Dandenong tulip festival and Mt Evelyn	<b>Organ Pipes National Park</b>	<b>Warrandyte State Park</b> and village
<b>The Dandenong Ranges National Park</b>	Phillip Island	<b>Westerfolds Park</b>
Direct Factory Outlet, Cheltenham		<b>Werribee Park</b> and Zoo

Of the 80 Melbourne parks managed by Parks Victoria highlighted in **bold** (Table 4.8), only ten parks in total were mentioned by all participants. The Yarra River, included in this total, is managed by Parks Victoria and this was mentioned frequently with reference to boat rides and walks along the riverbank.

## Regional Participants

Participants with children of a variety of ages believe Melbourne has a lack of specific activities or entertainment for children. Three *Warrnambool* participants felt that Sydney or the Gold Coast provided more targeted entertainment for children for example, theme parks. A *Traralgon* participant chose to visit Melbourne without the children on occasions to experience activities that would otherwise be difficult with children.

Several participants from *Mansfield*, *Traralgon*, *Bendigo*, *Warrnambool* and *Shepparton* considered entertainment for families to be expensive in Melbourne. Southbank is considered a free or low cost attraction and overall was the most popular destination with the participants. However, other opportunities for free or inexpensive attractions were unknown for example, the City Circle Tram. One *Mansfield* participant highlighted however, that free activities such as visiting a park or catching a tram has less appeal than visiting IMAX for example. He suggested “*things are very different when you have kids. If it were just the two of us it might be different but it is good to have something like IMAX to aim at [for the children]*”. This may suggest a change in the way children seek entertainment. Two *Shepparton* participants indicated the presence of children encouraged them to visit Puffing Billy. An elder participant takes his grandchildren to Puffing Billy including Lakeside. The other participant mentioned her children were “*older now so they do not go*”.

When participants discussed activities, visiting friends or relatives was a priority in all focus group locations. One *Mansfield* participant stated “*as long as you have got family and friends in Melbourne [this] is incentive [to visit]*”. *Shepparton* participants mentioned christenings, birthdays and graduations as reasons to visit relatives and friends in Melbourne. One *Shepparton* participant stated “*family bonding is the main reason; everything else is the icing on the cake*”.

With reference to pre-planned activities one *Mansfield* participants agreed with the suggestion that generally they would “*make some plans for example [visit the] beach or*

*Luna Park, see some friends, [shop at] Southlands, then they would [ask friends or relatives] what else [there is] to do or what else is going on".* A Warrnambool participant with adult children living in Melbourne suggested she only travels to Melbourne to visit her children but always has activities planned and needs to coordinate and schedule this with the children's working lives. She tells her family members of her intentions and they worked on how they could fit it around any spare time they might have to share a meal. Another Warrnambool participant who indicated she frequented events in Melbourne suggested she had a *"good amount of free time to spend which I decide on once there. It is usually spent babysitting my grandchildren"*. This participant was one of the few who indicated she had available time; this may be relevant to her life stage as a grandparent.

### **Metropolitan participants**

Metropolitan focus group and in-depth interview participants suggested similar activities and attractions for their guests in Melbourne as those highlighted by regional participants. All study respondents placed emphasis on city-based attractions (Table 4.8). The general responses included; Cricket, Formula One Grand Prix, AFL games, concerts and musicals. There was no emphasis on Parks Victoria managed parks. Southbank, the Royal Botanic Gardens and cultural attractions proving to be popular city-based attractions with shopping featuring as a preferred activity alongside the actual time spent with family or friends with whom they were visiting.

The Royal Botanic Gardens was praised for its variety and excellent signposting. One metropolitan participant said, *"Apart from the Yarra parks and the Botanical gardens, I would never think to take a regional Victorian to a park"*. Dandenong Ranges National Park also featured as a popular recommended destination. Participants felt it had enough variety to cater for all ages and abilities. A metropolitan participant recommended the *"Dandenong's to get out of the city; you can go and get a coffee and cake but most [guests want] to go for a walk and [there are] some beautiful walks up there"*.

It was generally agreed by both regional and metropolitan participants that regional communities had excellent parks in their home regions. This view was expressed by several participants in regional focus groups and was the perception of metropolitan hosts. This heightens the suggestion of a need for improved awareness of opportunities in Melbourne.

#### **4.2.3 Awareness**

Lack of awareness was perceived as a major constraint. A lack of readily available information was highlighted in both regional and metropolitan locations. Participants discussed their knowledge of parks and where they sourced information.

##### **Regional Participants**

Awareness of city-based attractions was high. However, when asked about parks, participants could name but a few. One person responded with: *“are there parks in Melbourne?”* A *Mansfield* participant suggested they *“would love to know more about parks that host events and dog walking”*.

The Royal Botanic Gardens and parks along the Yarra River were the most popular parks able to be identified (Table 4.8). Participants in the *Bendigo* group commented that advertisements relating to Melbourne generally emphasise sophistication through cultural attractions and restaurants rather than natural holidays. They argued that Melbourne is disadvantaged in attracting people to its natural features in relation to Sydney and other cities. To illustrate this they highlighted the attractiveness of Sydney Harbour and surrounds.

Several *Warrnambool* participants also mentioned that they were privileged with excellent beaches in their region and would not consider visiting a beach while in Melbourne, as a better experience would not be gained. *Warrnambool* participants expressed pride in their Botanic Gardens, adventure playground and coastal parks. One

*Warrnambool* participant questioned whether Melbourne had an adventure playground as good as Lake Pertobe Adventure Playground in Warrnambool?

When participants were asked how and where they sourced their information, it was disclosed that virtually all participants collected information in their home region. The (regional) local paper or the ‘What’s on’ sections from *The Age* or the *Herald Sun* were the major sources of information. Once in Melbourne, regional participants sought advice from others if time was available. Although the literature suggested that use of the Internet was increasing, regional participants did not concur with this view and did not consider the Internet an important source of information.

### **Metropolitan Participants**

Some metropolitan participants suggested that parks should be harnessing the opportunities that the larger events or festivals are providing. While their regional visitor (friend or relative) is visiting Melbourne for a specific event, there is an element of spare time that could be harnessed. One participant highlighted that during “*big events like (football) finals, people (park management agencies) should take the opportunity to highlight (promote) what they have*”. With specific reference to the Northcote music festival, another participant suggested it has “*excellent coverage and festivals like that shouldn’t go to waste*”.

One of the main concerns addressed was that of the perceived need for variety in parks. The most popular request was to have more parks providing quality activities for children, up to and inclusive of teenage years. The main structural facilitator that family groups sought was a playground. Not all participants had children but the majority needed to cater for the interests of their visiting friends or relatives’ children. Showcase examples were discussed for example, Packer Park (Carnegie) and Hays Paddock (Kew) playgrounds (Figure 4.2), which generated interest amongst those who had not heard of such places. Packer Park is managed by Glen Eira City Council. Within Packer Park there is a velodrome, a large playground, a water feature, shelter, barbeques and toilets. Similar

features are found at Hays Paddock, managed by the City of Boroondara. Hays Paddock has the advantage of being within 13 kilometres or a 12 minute drive from Melbourne CBD (whereis.com, n.d) and quite accessible from many northern and eastern suburbs.

Attributes of Hays Paddock included the well enclosed playground, (Figure 4.2, photo 1). There are well located signs guiding drivers to the park and on arrival car parking close to the park facilities with sealed paths (Figure 4.2, photo 2). Hays Paddock contains variety which includes playground equipment catering for a range of abilities (Figure 4.2, photo 3), wetland areas with bird hides (Figure 4.2, photo 4) and open spaces with barbeque facilities (Figure 4.2, photo 5). There is also seating available with trees and shade cloth providing shade protection (Figure 4.2, photo 6).

**Figure 4.2: Variety found at Hays Paddock, Kew**

*Photo 1: Well enclosed playground area*



*Photo 2: Accessible Car park*



*Photo 3:*

*Paths, seating, shade and an array of apparatus for a variety of ages and abilities*





*Photo 4: Variety includes wetland with bird hide*



*Photo 5: Open spaces and BBQ facilities*





*Photo 6: Shaded areas and innovative playground equipment*



Participants suggested that variety in parks should take into account the consideration of age. Children with apparent boundless energy need to be considered as well as the elderly and infirm. The Royal Botanic Gardens was criticised as an example of having difficult gradients for elderly people to walk. However, it was praised for the signage that alerted visitors to this. It was felt that in order to encourage longer stays, there needed to be more activities for a range of ages to participate in. Suggestions from participants included somewhere to kick a ball, a playground, shelters, seating, barbeques, open spaces bordered with well vegetated areas within the same park and interpretive signage. When it was suggested by the moderator that such places did exist, many of the participants again raised the problem of a lack of awareness.

Awareness issues had different dimensions. Participants needed information about places to go, the diversity of the parks and diversity within each park. Parks Victoria publishes brochures that outline all the metropolitan parks, indicating what attractions/facilities are available at each. The printed publication is titled '*Guide to Parks, Reserves and Waterways*'. A publication available in both Web and printed leaflet format is entitled

*'Melbourne's Metro Parks'*. The information contained within *'Melbourne's Metro Parks'* is replicated in the *'Melway: Greater Melbourne'* directory. None of the participants had seen the brochures nor had noticed the relevant pages in Melway.

One metropolitan participant noted that it is *"no good saying you can get brochure off the web because you need information handy and in your car"*. Supporting this view another participant stated: *"Parks Victoria have their parks advertised well but you need to be able to get your hands on them (brochures)."* Although a comprehensive park listing is found on the Parks Victoria Web Page, it was evident that few participants utilised the Internet and required printed material. Another participant stated that *"there is a need for improved marketing and education about the range of parks. Display the events taking place [and aim] for a broader range of people"*.

When prompted about their sources of information, metropolitan participants highlighted the local paper, the *Herald Sun* and/or *The Age* as the popular mediums utilised. Family members of the metropolitan focus groups regarded the publication *Melbourne's Child* as essential monthly reading and believed this to be a missed opportunity for the advertising and promotion of parks. A participant residing in the City of Whitehorse pointed out that they *received "regular pamphlets from the council (which incorporated) what's on (in the vicinity and) what facilities are available (including) bike (cycle) trails and paths"*. This could easily be adopted by other councils.

One metropolitan focus group had three participants who either worked or resided in the City of Darebin. Here the 'TravelSmart campaign' has addressed the need for and promotion of alternative forms of transport. Residents of Darebin received literature containing lifestyle changing suggestions including bicycle path maps of the area. The three participants agreed that as a result of this campaign, they have observed an increase in visitation to the parks in the municipality. One participant noted, *"Had it not been for the funding by the government to promote the alternative methods of travel and highlight the assets of our municipality (Darebin), it would not have been as successful. Now that we know about this (alternative transport and parks) we will take advantage of it."*

One in-depth interview participant had an excellent knowledge of parks through walking guides and direct contact with park rangers. All participants utilised either a local newspaper or *The Age* to check on current events. Two participants used the Internet to search activities or information about parks. All participants relied on word-of-mouth recommendations and preferred to return to parks they had personal and previous knowledge of. Two in-depth interview participants utilised the printed publications *That's Melbourne* and *What's on in Melbourne* to see what events were available.

Four of the five in-depth interview participants believed the main attraction to visiting a park was the playground. One participant stated that her teenage regional visitors would not be interested in visiting a park but her metropolitan-based relatives would frequently suggest meeting in one of Melbourne's parks. In all instances, hosts preferred to choose a park which contained a playground thereby accommodating the needs of their own young children and those of their guests.

If the guests were elderly, mobility was a major consideration. One participant believed their older guests prefer a more relaxed visit and enjoy a short trip to a park. However, they felt it needed to be close to other attractions or activities their visitors are interested in. One suggestion was to combine a relaxed walk in the Royal Botanic Gardens with a shopping visit in the CBD. This combination of the Royal Botanic Gardens, shopping and Southbank proved to be popular with all participants. Birrarung Marr (managed by the City of Melbourne), was also included in the possibilities around the Yarra vicinity though only two participants had used this park. Dandenong Ranges National Park also featured as a popular recommended destination.

It became apparent in discussions among participants that there was no clear distinction between Parks Victoria and local council managed parks. Many of the participants took pride in their local parks although many of those named were in fact council owned parks as opposed to Parks Victoria parks. When this was later addressed by the moderator, many participants were very surprised that there was a distinction as to who managed the

parks and assumed parks were managed by a central organisation. This perhaps suggests Parks Victoria needs to market their parks as distinctive from parks managed by other organisations. The alternative is to work with other park management agencies to raise the profile of parks as a recreation venue.

Metropolitan participants highlighted the importance of the age of guests visiting. Park visitation was considered an important inclusion if the visitors had pre-teen children. Although metropolitan participants were aware Melbourne's metropolitan area had several parks, unless they had previously visited and received a positive experience they would not recommend a park without this prior knowledge.

#### **4.2.4 Transport**

Transport difficulties, private and public were major constraints raised by the majority of participants. This included congestion, confusion of road signs and tolls and the cost of parking. For those participants who used public transport, they discussed ticket purchasing and routes.

#### **Regional Participants**

Upon arrival in Melbourne, regional visitors had concerns regarding their mode of transport. Overall, regional participants expressed a general apprehension of driving in congested urban traffic and sought public transport alternatives. This in itself incurred major problems with particular reference to trams. Participants highlighted the need for prior knowledge about either car routes or public transport routes before they would consider incorporating a visit to a park in their agenda.

The **train** service received some criticism. Some *Warrnambool* participants felt more money could be spent upgrading regional trains taking passengers to Melbourne. They felt the quality of regional trains was very poor compared to the metropolitan ones. Both the *Warrnambool* and *Wodonga* groups questioned funding for the redevelopment of

Spencer Street Station, now named Southern Cross Station. One participant recommended the government should spend more money on the regions and quality of the trains, instead of centralising the spending in Melbourne.

The **tram** system was considered a major constraint by all six focus groups. Many participants expressed confusion about tram services and felt they required more information about ticket purchasing, zones, routes and potential destinations. Conductors were seen as helpful when getting on a tram outside of Flinders Street Station but there was confusion as to when one should get off to reach their desired destination, as often no notification is given. There was some expectation or at least hope that bus and taxi drivers, as well as tram conductors might be able to provide more information in the future.

**Taxi** services received some negative attention from some participants in *Warrnambool*, *Wodonga*, *Bendigo*, *Shepparton* and *Mansfield*. Several participants had some bad experiences with taxi drivers not being able to speak English or not knowing their way around Melbourne. One *Shepparton* participant mentioned the information volunteers that circulate at Sydney Airport and also highlighted the importance of word-of-mouth recommendations for activities and attractions. This led to a recommendation that taxi drivers take a leading role as information providers for Melbourne attractions. An initiative since adopted by the City of Melbourne.

Participants from *Warrnambool* and *Mansfield* highlighted the confusion of the road **signage** and the **E-Tag** system on the tollways when driving. One participant described this system as ‘fearful’ but many agreed they needed more information or clearer instructions on how to use the system. One *Mansfield* participant spoke of how they accidentally entered the toll road due to a lack of signs whilst trying to visit Birrarrung Marr, resulting in a negative experience during their visit. He suggested, “*Why can’t there be one lane where you pull over to pay?*” A *Shepparton* participant described her frustration with signs and anxiety of driving in the city. She said “*I was confused and went round and round and got lost, ending up on a toll road*”.

Several focus groups interviewees mentioned sign posting as a constraint. One participant from *Bendigo* described the need for more signage around the Polly Woodside and the Casino vicinity. Several participants from *Shepparton* agreed that signage needs improving particularly at junctions where signs are only located on one side of the road. They also felt the terminology used on the freeway is confusing especially when combined with trying to concentrate on their driving. This led to a discussion about the problem of aggressive city driving, which was a common view amongst all the focus groups.

The cost of **parking** in Melbourne was considered a constraint by all six focus groups. The time spent ‘hunting’ for parking was also mentioned as a concern. Some people, who preferred inner city accommodation, chose this location to reap the benefits of the hotel’s CBD location and car parking which enabled them to drive directly to their accommodation, then walk or utilise public transport once there. Others considered the high cost of parking as a factor that put them off travelling to Melbourne. The common consensus was to utilise public transport or taxis regardless of how you initially travel to Melbourne from the regions. Many of those staying in the suburbs used trains or taxis if heading to the city. All these aspects lead to a poor visitor experience and can be detrimental to future visits.

This combination of problems associated with driving in and around Melbourne is a perceived constraint. This inhibits regional participants from using their private vehicle once in Melbourne and they seek alternative forms of transport. Alternatives include public services or a reliance on family and friends. In the absence of family and friends or use of public services, participants walked from their accommodation.

### **Metropolitan Participants**

Many participants accompanied their visitors to a park, with the most popular form of transport being the car. Those with children felt this was the most sensible form of

transport in order to carry both people and equipment for the park experience. There was a general impression that special equipment, for example, sporting equipment, was required to make the park experience more enjoyable therefore increased the necessity to bring a car.

One focus group participant was supportive of the public transport system stating that, *“Many (parks) in my area are accessible by public transport (including) Bundoora park, (and) Yarra Bend Park. But in most cases it is easier to place the kids in the car.”* Life stage poses another constraint. The number of people and range of ages in a party can make public transport problematic. Although public transport is available to most Parks Victoria locations, it was deemed impractical or too expensive. The Dandenong Ranges was a good example of a destination where a car was necessary, as public transport was considerably difficult or expensive. Two participants regularly used public transport but highlighted that, *“It is easier to go into the city by train, but across the suburbs by car.”*

When visitors arrived in their own vehicle, access and parking was considered important. Yarra Bend Park was cited by an in-depth participant as an example of a park with poor numbers of parking spaces, particularly on a weekend when there was a higher density of visitors. Westerfolds Park and Williamstown beach were cited as good examples with plentiful parking even during busy periods. The location of Yarra Bend Park located four kilometres from Melbourne CBD (whereis.com, n.d) is surrounded by higher density population compared to Westerfolds Park located 21 kilometres from Melbourne CBD (whereis.com, n.d). This may have an impact on the number of visitors and the problem of overcrowding.

As visitors preferred not to drive once in Melbourne, public transport was considered very important. On most occasions there would not be enough room in the family car to transport both their family and the visiting guests to a park. Public transport was deemed particularly useful if the host was recommending a visit to a park without accompanying their guests. Although one in-depth interview participant's guests were confident and familiar with the public transport system, another participant felt the expense and

confusion public transport would impose on her guests would influence her suggestions to visit certain attractions. A differentiating factor here was familiarity of Melbourne and its public transport system. Some regional participants have moved into regional areas having originated in Melbourne therefore, increasing their familiarity with routes and ticketing. Some visitors described the public transport system as daunting due to the size and complexity compared to their local transport systems. There would also be differences of opinion for those regional visitors who live in built up areas compared to those living in more isolated sections of regional Victoria.

#### **4.2.5 Other Constraints Identified**

##### *Melbourne's Tourist Environment*

#### **Regional Participants**

The general impression was that the women participants find Melbourne to be less safe than do men and the latter find it safer than it used to be in the past. No one regarded safety as a limitation to visiting Melbourne but more of a consideration once there. People with children tended to be more vigilant and others mentioned taking more care with belongings. Female *Shepparton* participants discussed their fears with regard to places to avoid in Melbourne. However, they agreed that perhaps it was more a perception than reality. Two ladies did discuss their bad experiences along Swanston Street and Lygon Street with particular regard to commercial harassment. *Safety* as an issue with regard to parks was not considered a constraint for regional participants.

#### **Metropolitan Participants**

Metropolitan participants however, were cautious with regard to park safety concerns. Focus group participants were cautious about the presence of snakes in summer months. With reference to snakes, one focus group participant said, "*I would be choosy about where to go with regard to snakes*" and she "*wouldn't take small children and let them*



*run wild*". A second focus group participant mentioned they had seen a snake the previous summer in a park and this had deterred a family member from returning. Another participant assumed that it would be a general concern taking dogs to parks in summer stating, *"I would be concerned with snakes if taking the dog to Darebin parklands."* The overall consensus was the realism that parks were habitat for snakes and precaution was a standard practice. Many agreed with these comments and assumed that most people would adopt a commonsense approach when visiting a park.

The second safety concern was with regard to isolation in parks and the perceived unsafe time periods. Personal safety fears were expressed by some females. One focus group participant said she *"would not enter a park alone, especially after dark"*. Another participant questioned park safety at night. She suggested that negative publicity and media attention towards unsociable behaviour in parks deters her from visiting. Another lady stated that *"some of the parks along the Yarra, you not go alone and I would think twice about taking people"*. Even with the majority of participants being female, safety was not a huge concern for park visitation although it was assumed that no one would visit a park alone. One participant stated they *"generally wouldn't go by oneself anyway"*. With agreement from two other members of the focus group, they felt they would only visit a park in a group. Overall, it was agreed that safety was considered a *"mindful constraint"* that being, something to consider, but not a deterrent to park visitation.

### *Weather*

### **All participants**

Most participants suggested they would not let Melbourne's variable **weather** deter them from visiting a park. However, if it was raining they would be unlikely to visit or make the recommendation to visit a park. The unsealed paths were deemed a constraint after or during a downpour. This is where more shelters were recommended near to play areas if

they were to be caught in unexpected rain or intermittent rainfall. One in-depth interview participant recommended cultural indoor attractions during winter months.

#### **4.2.6 Special Issues**

##### *Events*

In the *Shepparton* group many participants expressed concern with the level of crowding at sporting and cultural events held in Melbourne. Moreover, a positive change to local conditions also appeared to play a role in influencing visitation to Melbourne. As more opportunities for cultural events and entertainment are being provided locally, some participants felt that they had no need to leave *Shepparton* in order to experience other entertainment events.

##### *Dogs*

One regional participant brought up the issue of the restrictiveness of parks with regard to dogs. She mentioned that travelling to Melbourne with a dog also poses significant restrictions regarding the accommodation available. For this reason, she and her husband preferred travelling with a caravan. This had implications for where they visited and parked their caravan. Restrictions on dogs were a constraint discussed by metropolitan participants also. Three of the metropolitan participants either had dogs or their visiting guests brought dogs with them. This featured as an awareness constraint with regard to whether dogs were permitted in parks and the disposal of waste during a park visit with a dog. Parks Victoria publishes a leaflet entitled: '*Where can I take my dog? A visitor guide to Victoria's parks, reserves and forest*' however participants did not appear aware of this.

### **4.3 Desk Research: Parks Victoria Operations**

It was important to consider the current forms of marketing undertaken by Parks Victoria so as to ascertain if there were any opportunities to enhance or improve marketing in the future. An inventory of current marketing methods deployed by Parks Victoria is represented in Table 4.9. The inventory was sourced from a paper written by the marketing manager for Parks Victoria J. Kievet (2001) and information from the Parks Victoria Web Pages. The inventory shows that more people access the Web Pages (925,000 per annum) for information about parks than make telephone calls (120,000 per annum). Without knowing the nature of the enquiries or the number of times an individual has visited the Web Page, there is reluctance to emphasise the importance of the Internet. The qualitative results did not support use of the Internet as an important source, particularly for regional participants.

Regional areas received marketing attention particularly at regional festivals (Table 4.9). However, a question remains as to what type of information is provided at such events with regard to metropolitan parks. Parks Victoria is responsible for 30 parks in Western Victoria, 60 parks in Eastern Victoria and 23 marine sanctuaries in addition to the parks found in Melbourne (Parks Victoria, 2004b). There is a desire to attract visitors to regional areas and their parks therefore this presents a potential conflict of interest. Parks Victoria has a wide variety of marketing and promotional activities and has established useful partnerships. Such partnerships include tour operators and other government organisations as shown in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Marketing and Promotional Activity Conducted by Parks Victoria**

Marketing and Promotions	
Advertising	Pictorial and editorial support. Brochures, map guides, information boards, and Web-based information.
Visitor Information Centres	Park notes and publications available including: <i>Guide to Victoria's parks, reserves and waterway</i> ,
PV Information Centre	Telephone information service. (approximately 120,000 calls p/a)
Website	Parks Victoria website provides information, maps, park notes and brochures achieving approximately 925,000 'visits' p/a.
Images to tourism bodies	Provision of images to Tourism Victoria
Public relations	Media activities, travel show coverage including 'Coxy's Big Break', 'Getaway' and Channel 9's 'Postcards'.
Marketing campaigns	Fee-for-entry attractions 'Healthy Parks, Healthy People'
Research	Visitor activities, trends and impacts
Regional marketing programs	Branding and tactical campaigns, packaging and promotions
Australian Tourism Exchange	Promoting park attractions to international travel trade and supporting industry.
Events	Sponsorship and participation in events including Victoria's Tourism Awards, Melbourne Show, Boat Show, Caravan and Camping Show, Festival of the Sail and various regional festivals and tourism conferences. Royal Melbourne Show, Country Living Show.
Partnerships and input	<p>260 Licensed tour operators with 3000 park based products.</p> <p>Victorian Trails Strategy, Tourism Plan for Melbourne's Waterfront, Victoria's Tourism Industry Strategic Plan, Victoria's Adventure Tourism Action Plan and Nature Based Tourism Strategy.</p> <p><i>Key partner organisations include:</i> Federal Department of Tourism, Tourism Victoria, Tourism Australia, Tourism Alliance, Victorian Tourism Industry Council, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Sustainable Tourism CRC (funding partner), local governments, regional and local tourism organisations, regional campaign committees and representative groups.</p> <p><i>Also:</i> Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Asthma Victoria, National Heart Foundation, Arthritis Victoria <i>and:</i></p> <p>Channel 9's 'Postcards'.</p>
Staff championing	Staff awards, Parks Victoria Intra Website, dragon boat team uniforms and stationary.

Source: Adapted from Kievet (2001); Parks Victoria (2005a)

## **4.4 Summary**

Eight focus groups and five in-depth interviews containing a total of 59 participants provided rich data on limitations and constraints to park visitation in metropolitan Melbourne. Many participants had their own recommendations to alleviate constraints. These are discussed in more depth in chapter five, providing valuable information on facilitators to leisure participation. An inventory of current marketing and promotional activities conducted by Parks Victoria was established in order to make future recommendations. Chapter five considers the important constraints and facilitators with regard to travel to and within Melbourne and park visitation as an activity choice on arrival. Practical recommendations are made for park managers to increase and retain park visitation.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The main research problem addressed in this thesis was: *There is a decline in the numbers of visitors to Melbourne's metropolitan parks as shown by Parks Victoria research in the period 2000 to 2003*. Chapter four presented results of the qualitative approach adopted in this thesis. This chapter aimed to resolve the theoretical aspects of the findings and report on the relationship to other theories and findings discussed in chapter two. Each research question is discussed sequentially with theoretical discussion complemented by practical implications.

### **5.1 Research Question One: What is the attractiveness of Melbourne as a short break destination for regional Victorians?**

The first research question examined the attractiveness of Melbourne as a short break destination for regional Victorians. This involved an examination of the reasons participants chose Melbourne as a short break destination and the activities they undertook once there.

#### **5.1.1 Consumer Behaviour**

There were four aspects to consumer behaviour discussed in chapter two. The findings of this study support an aspect of travel motivation theory. Lee et al. (2002) proposed that the desire to seek a recreational experience was a greater driving force than the desire to escape. Few participants expressed a desire to escape their origins but the majority of participants indicated the 'pull' factor or desire to visit family and friends was their major reason for travelling to Melbourne. This therefore supports Swarbrooke and Horner's (1999:72) view that the consumer is "strongly influenced by other people" or as this study suggests, the desire to visit others, was a major consideration and influence on the decision to travel.

This study revealed that Melbourne was not being compared to other cities when an ‘awareness set’ (Um and Crompton 1999) was being established. A short break ‘awareness set’ for regional participants also included coastal destinations (Table 4.7). Although 45% suggested that their ideal holiday would be a coastal location, the desire to see family and friends placed Melbourne as a competitive destination for their available time. This confirms the influence of family, as identified in the model by Mayo and Jarvis (1981), as an important variable in destination choice. The decision-flow framework developed by Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000) becomes important with regard to secondary decisions including activities. With the desire to see friends and family as one of the main activities, attractions in Melbourne’s CBD and metropolitan areas have opportunities to attract the VFR sector.

In most instances the quantitative results of the focus groups were comparable with the statistics produced by Tourism Victoria (2002). This includes where participants stayed, how they travelled to Melbourne and the activities they participated in whilst in Melbourne. The main reasons regional Victorians visited Melbourne as stated in the 2001 NVS data were:

- visiting family (33%),
- visiting friends (18%),
- business (14%), and
- attending a special event or festival (4%).

Once in Melbourne, the main activities regional Victorians participated in included:

- visiting friends (68%),
- eating out (58%),
- shopping (43%), and
- sightseeing (25%).

NVS (2002).

This was supported in the comments made by the majority of focus group participants and was reflected in Table 4.8.

This data has supported Archer's (2005) suggestion that Melbourne's metropolitan parks are not included in the decision making processes of destination choice. What it has shown is the level of interest participants displayed in their desire to know more about park opportunities in and around Melbourne. Although parks are excluded from the decision to travel, once at a destination, urban parks do contribute to their overall tourism experience. The participants of this study indicated the importance of metropolitan parks, though seen as a secondary activity to the main purpose of the trip. Unlike the need to fulfil the purpose of the trip, a park visit is subject to various factors. These include; suitable weather, transport availability, time and whether it is known and/or has been experienced by their hosts.

Visiting a metropolitan park, whilst visiting Melbourne, is part of the urban tourism experience albeit with a low profile. Arguably, many of Melbourne's urban parks do not have the same appeal as the Royal Botanic Gardens or harness the same 'pull' factors that exist with some of the world's more famous parks, such as, Hyde Park, London or Central Park, New York. However, the portfolio of metropolitan parks does complement the range of attractions available in Melbourne and provides valuable alternative activities.

For many participants, park visitation is not identified as part of their tourist experience for it falls in the realms of a transient activity or a time-filling exercise when moving from one specific tourism attraction to another. The low profile of Melbourne's parks should not be confused with unimportance. Many participants recalled positive experiences in metropolitan parks that they had forgotten. Parks fulfil several needs. For example, aesthetic, social and physical activities, but what this thesis has shown is that parks offer more visitation potential than is currently being utilised. This is due to factors such as a lack of awareness and perceived available time.

Destination marketers in Melbourne should consider the needs of the important VFR market sector. Regional participants were willing to visit Melbourne as a short break,



forfeiting that of a coastal break. Implicating emotional considerations are involved in VFR travel. Such VFR travellers could be categorised as ‘habitual’ decision makers (Crotts 1999). This has implications for activity choice once in Melbourne as ‘habitual’ decision makers have a need for updated information. The majority of information collection for regional participants took place at a local level. This study has confirmed the importance of preplanning for regional Victorians. This supports the importance of prepurchase information collection discussed by Crotts (1999) whose results revealed 71.5% activity choice took place before departure.

Once in Melbourne, regional visitors relied on their hosts for word-of-mouth information. The quality of word-of-mouth information was dependent on the knowledge a host had of their local area. Crotts (1999) regards word-of-mouth information as the most influential source affecting consumer decision making. This study identified a limited awareness and a lack of interest for visiting metropolitan parks by regional Victorians. Metropolitan participants were reluctant to recommend parks as an activity for their guests. Many people, who participated in this study, recognised there was the opportunity to visit natural resources when they were next visiting Melbourne. Host participants left the discussion forums with a range of new ideas and suggestions they could utilise in future. Thus effectively this study has helped to raise some much needed awareness albeit with a small number of people.

## **5.2 Research Question Two: What are the perceived constraints to metropolitan park visitation by regional and metropolitan visitors?**

By referring to the constraint and facilitator models used in this thesis, the discussion addresses each of the three core variables: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Structural (refer to Figure 2.1). The discussion aims to address the second research question highlighting theoretical implications. The second interview question examined the perceived constraints to metropolitan park visitation. Chapter two examined the constraints theory proposed by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991), Raymore’s (2002) constraints and facilitators model and the CPM (2000-2003). The focus groups and in-

depth interviews clarified the CPM information and provided additional detailed information about why participants would not visit a park and what would encourage them to do so.

### **5.2.1 Intrapersonal Influences on Park Visitation**

*Personality* preferences and traits were not measured in this study but have an influence on a person's interest to visit a park. Past experience was a major constraint or facilitator to all the regional participants who had experience of parks in Melbourne but was even more paramount to the metropolitan participants. This is because of the influence of word-of-mouth recommendations. If a person has had a positive experience in a park, this resulted in repeat visitation and they were more likely to suggest this as a possible activity to others. A negative experience resulted in negative word-of-mouth and a low chance of repeat visitation. Of concern were past park visitors, who had a negative experience years ago, who have not since returned. This finding supports that of Paradise and Prosser (1987) who discussed the need for an improved information system so visitors could select an activity or park which would best suit their needs. This in turn will address the third intrapersonal constraint or facilitator, *self-efficacy*. For example, individuals know their own ability levels and with updated and accurate information they would be able to select the most appropriate park experience.

### **5.2.2 Utilising the Influence of Interpersonal Facilitators**

Participants of this study confirmed the influence of *family* and *peers* and to a lesser extent *strangers* and *authority figures*. Word-of-mouth information was sought from interpersonal facilitators upon arrival in Melbourne. Decision making was influenced by peers or family. If a visitor was reliant on others for transport, this then had a greater influence. This can also be applied to demographics and life cycle stage which were identified as key constraints or facilitators to park visitation. Those travelling as a family had differing needs and were influenced by the ages and interests of their family

members. Single travellers or those who were travelling as a couple were less restricted in their choices.

### *Family and Peers - Hosts*

This study has highlighted the importance of ‘word-of-mouth’ recommendations and ‘repeat visitation’ to raise awareness of opportunities for participation in activities. Family events such as astronomical viewings or Christmas carols in the park attract a diverse and large number of the community. If this initial visit is successful, repeat visitation and word-of-mouth recommendations would inevitably follow.

There are two types of metropolitan hosts with regard to park use as identified in this study.

1) Current park users (repeat visitors); who are willing to take guests to places they have been to before; and

2) Spontaneous park users: who will take advantage of what is currently advertised.

If there are specific events held in parks and these are advertised in either the local paper, *Melbourne’s Child* or *The Age* events guide, both types of hosts would actively encourage guests to attend a park with them. More consideration should be given to the host and the knowledge they are imparting.

### *Family - Influences*

Labone and Wearing (1994), and the CPM data for 2003 supports the notion that the presence of children potentially increases park usage. Many metropolitan and regional participants with families expressed a need for more information with regard to proximity of parks. They also required information on specific attractions within those parks before they would consider including parks in their planned activities. A selection of parks were considered to be ‘flagship parks’ and these usually had a specific attraction. Such parks usually had a modern playground or encompassed a variety of attractions within the one park. Relatively unknown parks should emulate flagship parks. So as not to compromise

the ecological value of existing metropolitan parks, careful consideration of land use within a park is essential. Where for example, there are existing playgrounds in need of upgrading or poor access within parks, Parks Victoria could consider the success of the 'flagship parks'.

Given the importance of the parental role, part of the solution to increase recreational opportunities for children involves raising the awareness of parents. Parents, who actively engage physical activity, act as positive role models and provide social support for children's physical activity (Kalakanis, Goldfield, Paluch and Epstein, 2001, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, 2001). Parks provide an accessible venue for recreation. Rosenberg (2005) and NSW Health: Childhood Obesity (n.d) suggested simple measures like the provision of balls and racquets to enhance the physical environment. This would therefore make parks more attractive to potential users.

Participants sought variety within parks, providing an attraction for members of the whole family. Suitable facilities were deemed necessary to attract visitors and extend the length of time spent in a park. With the provision of bike paths, shelters, barbeques and playgrounds, increased time can be spent at a park, leading to potential repeat visits. Several participants expressed the need for a place where the family can sit down whilst being able to see children play clearly.

If the majority of family vacation decision making is made jointly by the parents (Nichols and Snepenger, 1999), promotional material should be made available early in the season and dispersed broadly. Joint decision makers do prefer to plan ahead therefore require access to material early. The findings of this thesis showed that those with school-aged children were more inclined to utilise school holiday periods for their family vacation. If the family market is seasonally dependent as Decrop (1999b) suggests, then marketers, targeting the family market, have a set pattern of vacation times to work within. School holiday times are published well in advance therefore allowing advanced planning. Recognising the timing of potential visitor information needs is suggested as a key factor to improve park visitation and is an area that requires more investigation (Crotts, 1999).

### *Family - Seniors*

Elderly people are important when considering word-of-mouth recommendations or repeat visitation. Elderly parents are often very good promoters of activities and local community facilities. They may take their grandchildren to a park or may encourage their own children to do so. Pensioners who may be on a low income or those who do not wish to spend an excess of money should be encouraged to participate in communal park activities. This provides an opportunity to spend leisure time with the younger generation without the outlay of costs.

By marketing the range of facilities, ease of access and a variety of activities suitable for a range of ages, elderly people will be encouraged to visit parks and take their families. Many metropolitan parks are accessible with regard to both transport and mobility. Parks are an ideal venue for increasing both active and passive leisure pursuits. In those parks where mobility is restricted, Parks Victoria needs to consider seating at regular intervals. Mobility can be improved with careful planning of the layout, location and surface of paths. Where this may be inappropriate, Parks Victoria should be encouraged to utilise the diversity of parks in the metropolitan portfolio and suggest an alternative park destination. Where recent modifications have taken place, this should be publicised since past visitors generally rely on their prior knowledge of what is available.

### *Interpersonal Summary*

A well informed visitor plays a substantial role in choice of recreational activities. Although there may be a limited amount of available time to visit local parks, such an activity is convenient and timeframes are flexible. With knowledge of the perceived constraints, Parks Victoria can aim to increase visitation of both regional and metropolitan visitors through heightened awareness and making informed use of ‘interpersonal facilitators’.

### 5.2.3 Structural Influences on Park Visitation

Referring to Raymore's (2002) Constraints and Facilitators Influencing Participation Model (Figure 2.1) several *structural* constraints have been confirmed. *Available time* was considered the most restrictive structural constraint by all participants. Although this does not appear in Figure 2.1, Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) refer to 'scheduling of work time' as a major constraint to leisure participation. Jackson (2000) suggests time be viewed as an antecedent constraint rather than an intervening barrier. Fairweather (2002) points out that Australians are travelling in shorter periods and less often. Shorter breaks to Melbourne result in fewer activities being undertaken; therefore, available time is a direct threat to the low priority park visitation receives. This confirms results by the NVS (2002), Griffin, Wearing and Archer (2004) and Griffin and Archer (2006).

Participants cited work commitments, family commitments and travelling time as the main reasons for not travelling to Melbourne as often as they would like. This is supportive of the 'institutional' behaviour (Butler and Mao, 1997, Hinch and Jackson 2000), imposed on people who are restricted within the confines of school and public holidays. Closer, less congested, alternative destinations were an attractive option for those short of available time.

Little can alter the time available to travel but destination and activity choice can be influenced. Melbourne as a destination, and park visitation as an activity, need to be competitively positioned. A common feature amongst the majority of regional participants was the small window of available time they have whilst visiting Melbourne. On average, participants felt they have approximately two hours of free time where they do not have an activity pre-planned. The majority of a short break involves a pre-determined agenda even if this is predominantly spending time with family and friends.

Members of the metropolitan focus groups and those involved in the in-depth interviews concurred with the statements about available free time. Whilst regional visitors felt that they did not generally need advice from their hosts whilst visiting Melbourne, the

majority agreed that they would seek the local knowledge of their host when filling any spare time. The choice of venue becomes particularly relevant when visitors are deciding where to spend time with family and friends. This leads to the conclusion that a well informed host is a crucial component to improved visitation to metropolitan parks.

*Socio-economic* factors including available money to spend on leisure activities were important considerations. Accommodation, parking, and entry fees into paying attractions were considered expensive, especially for families. Low income earners considered park visitation as expensive particularly if travel was included in the equation (Natural Resources and Environment Committee, 1987, Griffin, Wearing and Archer, 2004). This study revealed that increasing fuel prices, constrains all socio-economic groups and is not limited to low income earners.

Safety was one of the few *gender* dividing topics with five metropolitan females identifying snakes or human antisocial behaviour as a threat. Parks would be avoided if there was negative media attention about specific parks. Three regional females regarded Melbourne's tourist environment threatening but not a deterrent. The other gender dividing issue raised in the literature review was time. An ABS (2004d) survey confirmed there was only a two percent difference in available leisure time between males and females. Family and work commitments were expressed equally as constraints on available leisure time by males and females in this study, therefore confirming a minimal difference.

The variety of ages and life stages represented in this thesis provided a variety of suggestions to enhance park experiences. This highlights the diversity Parks Victoria need to consider. *Facilities* were considered major structural constraints and facilitators. Common to all participants was the desire to visit a park that offered variety in terms of landscape. A representative comment about what a park should contain was "*one (single) park with a lot of variety would be ideal: trees, water feature, bridges (basically) more than just grass*". Parks that are considered excellent examples with the right 'ingredients' for repeat visitation include Packer Park (Carnegie), Hays Paddock (Kew) and Bundoora

Park (Bundoora), (all council owned parks). These parks are considered 'flagship parks' by the metropolitan participants in this study. A variety of facilities including barbecues, toilets, sealed or defined paths, seating, a good playground, dog walking area, shelter, shade, and adequate parking were deemed necessary to the potential park visitor. A perceived absence of such facilities resulted in an alternative activity or attraction being selected. This has implications in two areas; awareness and alternative leisure activities.

Although awareness is not specifically mentioned in Figure 2.1, Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) have identified this as a constraint to leisure participation. Spotts and Stynes (1984), Paradise and Prosser (1987) and Bickerstaff (1988) all discussed the need for improved awareness of park information. The fact that participants considered parks a low priority as a competitive activity was a reflection on their limited awareness of park opportunities. Awareness of opportunities and knowledge (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey 1991) is confirmed as a major structural constraint for both metropolitan and regional Victorians.

*Institutions* can be considered an effective medium in which to create awareness. Parks Victoria provides Web-based information servicing 925,000 visits per annum (Table 4.9) however, regional participants did not utilise the Internet to preplan their Melbourne visit. Therefore, this study would not promote the use of the Internet when targeting regional Victorians, as otherwise suggested by several publications (Barry, 2001, Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, 2003a, Tourism NSW, 2001). There is a need for 'off-site communication' (Archer and Wearing, 2002) to raise awareness of parks (Dumas, 1980) by utilising the more popular mediums including printed material. Awareness has been considered within the discussion of consumer behaviour and has been identified as a constraint and facilitator in all three areas of Raymore's (2002) model.

Important structural constraints that should be regarded when considering park visitation include 'alternative leisure activities', 'transport and distance'. They were not included in Raymore's (2002) model or Crawford, Jackson and Godbey's (1991) constraints theory.



‘Distance’ was the second highest constraint in the CPM data, ‘alternative leisure activities’ ranked third and ‘transport’ issues ranked fourth (CPM 2003). The participants of this study confirmed the importance of these structural constraints with regard to park visitation. ‘Alternative leisure activities’ pose a threat to Melbourne’s parks, particularly if the alternative is considered to be accessible, affordable, accommodates a range of facilities and provides a totally different ‘experience’ to what visitors can find at home.

Greater distance and longer travel time did not alter the number of visits a regional Victorian makes to Melbourne. However, ‘transport’ and ‘distance’ factors are interrelated with ‘alternative leisure activities’ because many regional participants dislike driving once in Melbourne and would seek easily accessible activity options. This posed a severe limitation to park visitation by regional Victorians as many preferred to use public transport once in the city. For visitors who disliked the use of public transport, they were limited to activities and attractions within walking distance. One way to combat this constraint is to prepare the potential visitor with information on how to easily reach parks by either private vehicle or public transport. A well planned route prior to departure may assist nervous drivers. This would help address the issue of ‘cognitive distance’ (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1999) and allow for a more accurate assessment of proximity and ease of access to metropolitan parks. This study revealed that parks which were perceived to be too far or too difficult to reach were disregarded. Conversely, if the park location was perceived to be within an acceptable distance, it was more likely to be an option.

### *Transport*

Necessary information deemed important by regional visitors included improved awareness of the E-Tag system on City Link and accessibility and improved signage for routes to their destinations. Whilst it can be argued that the current signage is sufficient, a pre-planned route may lead to less confusion and more driver confidence. Regional participants requested improvements in parking prices which may be further exacerbated by the new parking levy in the city. The other aspect of transport difficulties is the lack of

knowledge patrons have of the public transport system. Regional Victorians need information on transport options including trains, trams and bus routes. Visitors need to be positively encouraged to use public transport.

Regional participants requested a guide or road map they could keep in the car in anticipation of a short break. Two known examples of such compact publications are *'This week in Melbourne'* and *'Discover Melbourne and Victoria'*. Although these event guides can become out-of date quickly, the benefits can outweigh this temporary nature. If the guides had improved distribution, a potential visitor would be confident that they have accurate and up-to date information. *'Discover Melbourne and Victoria'* has an informative section on using Melbourne's public transport system and includes maps. Such information is necessary to bridge the knowledge gap patrons have of the public transport system including ticket purchasing and transport routes to park destinations, especially for suburban to suburban locations. The distribution of such guides in the regional information centres would prove useful prior to departure. It may also be worthwhile distributing event guides at petrol stations along major route ways. Park information through feature articles could be made more prominent in such publications.

For those visitors relying on taxi transport, several negative comments were made about the lack of information passed on by taxi drivers. The City of Melbourne has begun to address this problem. In August 2004, Lord Mayor John So stated that the 'The Melbourne Taxi Tourism Ambassador program' will educate drivers to "improve their customer service skills and become mobile tourist information services" (City of Melbourne, 2004). By ensuring some park awareness was part of the program; benefits to Parks Victoria could be gained.

From a metropolitan perspective, hosts were under the impression that if they were to recommend an activity it should be easily accessible. If they were to recommend a park they felt that, as hosts, they should accompany their guests to the park and driving is a more convenient and less expensive option, particularly with children. This perception, held by both regional visitors and metropolitan hosts, was one that could be tackled by a

scheme such as the Darebin TravelSmart campaign mentioned previously. There was also a general impression that it was necessary to bring a car, to carry equipment which would make the park experience more enjoyable.

### **5.3 Research Question Three: What awareness do people have of Melbourne's parks?**

Particularly with regard to regional visitors, interest in Melbourne's metropolitan parks was limited, therefore reiterating Parks Victoria's initial concerns. The number of regional participants who stated an interest in, or had actual visits to, a metropolitan park, was very low. However, the lack of current interest does not mean Melbourne's parks cannot become a more prominent feature for regional Victorians visiting Melbourne.

Raymore (2002:39) suggests researchers should seek answers and provide "strategies for creating accessible leisure experiences" by seeking "information from individuals about the resources that have helped them access and experience leisure". This thesis sought to provide solutions to help address the decline in visitation to Melbourne's metropolitan parks.

#### **5.3.1 Awareness**

Most metropolitan participants indicated that there are particular parks they would visit. This was because metropolitan participants have experienced several parks before and they are fully aware of the facilities, features and variety. The parks that metropolitan participants visit are however, not necessarily those in their immediate proximity but were often within 30 minutes travelling time. This confirms Leary and McDonnell's (2001) observation that a park does not need to be in a visitor's local government area for a park to be utilised. Two popular parks metropolitan participants chose were not 'Parks Victoria' parks. The parks named had a special feature or a distinct attraction, both Hays Paddock, Kew (see Figure 4.2) and Packer Park, Carnegie have innovative and interactive playgrounds and support facilities.

In the destination image model by Echtner and Ritchie (1991), a destination can be classified as having unique versus common dimensions. Marketers could highlight 'common' characteristics which clients may come to expect in any park. An example of such a characteristic is a playground. Clients will compare and rate parks according to their experiences in other parks. The other alternative is to utilise symbols to focus on a 'unique' feature or event taking place in a park, identifying it as different from others.

The Parks Victoria portfolio is full of recreational diversity. In order to enhance the visitor experience, the promotion and development of a **distinct image** of each park would allow visitors to actually see and experience something different in each park thereby encouraging them to experience a greater number of parks. For current park users, they need their awareness of parks broadened to encompass other, Parks Victoria parks, possibly closer to their place of residence.

Several parks already have pictorial icons, for example:

- Westerfolds Park – Platypus (Figure 5.1),
- Yarra Flats – Bat (Figure 5.2),
- Jells Park – Sugar Glider,
- Horseshoe Bend Farm – Farm Scene.

**Figure 5.1 Westerfolds Park Entrance Sign/ Logo**



**Figure 5.2 Yarra Flats Entrance Sign/Logo**



Such visual icons could be used to differentiate metropolitan parks and place emphasis on their cultural or natural elements. Icons could enhance park themes or provide positive, unique, realistic images. For example, it was mentioned by some participants of the

*Bendigo* focus group that they would go to Herring Island because of the sculptures. This is an excellent example of how a distinct feature can be used to develop a specific, easily recognisable and appealing image of a lesser known park. Regional participants expressed a willingness to go to a park that provided habitat for a species of animal not found in their home region. In parks that provide a habitat to a particular species of flora or fauna, this could be part of their promotional campaign. Other suggestions include Yarra Bend Park being promoted as the ‘family park’, Horseshoe Bend Farm as the ‘farm’ park and Pipemakers Park, the ‘industrial’ park.

Enhancing the visitor experience should help improve attitudes towards parks and encourage repeat visitation. Parks Victoria could raise the profile of the numerous events they host in parks thereby attracting metropolitan and regional visitors. Events, as drawcards to parks, were mentioned by numerous participants in this study and many people felt more opportunities for events could be held in parks. An event could be created and conducted by park personnel or the park could provide a setting. The planet Mars viewing event at Bundoora Park was a suggestion of an appropriately themed event that could lead to more astrological evenings in the future.

With the popularity of key sports mentioned in Chapter 2.3.1, there may be further opportunities for clubs to make more use of park locations. Albert Park is a good example of providing sporting opportunities attracting AFL and tennis clubs. Future planning may see an integration of sporting facilities as part of the metropolitan park landscape. Clubs utilising park-based tennis courts and football teams utilising ovals would encourage weekly visitation. Visitation would be further increased by the participant’s supporters including friends and families. Such initiatives would target metropolitan communities and visitors with the additional outcome of increasing awareness for future visits with guests.

### 5.3.2 Awareness Summary

Visitation to metropolitan parks amongst regional participants was low. According to regional participants this was not based on the quality of the product, but was deemed to be a reflection of the low level of awareness people have of urban natural areas and its low priority as an activity in relation to other experiences when visiting Melbourne.

If park visitors are satisfied with their experience, then this will be reflected in a positive evaluation of park management. In order to have the experience of visiting a park, visitors must overcome obstacles; perceived or real. When CPM respondents are asked “*how do you rate Parks Victoria as managers...*” one must consider the amount of prior contact the respondent has had. It must also be considered if in fact, earlier experiences have been positive. Only then, can this question be considered for the evaluation of park management. It could be argued that this CPM question is an unfair assessment tool upon which to rate a park manager, especially considering the range of variables associated with the answer ‘don’t know’. In view of the limited levels of awareness experienced by both regional and metropolitan Victorians further enquiry into the current marketing methods was necessary before any improvements could be recommended.

## 5.4 Research Question Four: How can Parks Victoria attract more visitors to their metropolitan parks?

The open-ended interview questions utilised were successful in drawing out the common components of Melbourne’s destination image. The responses from the *warm up question* (Appendix 7), allowed regional participants to identify their ideal holiday. This provided the notion that visiting Melbourne often took the form of a *necessary* break involving visits to attractions as compared to a relaxing holiday destination. *Question ‘A’*, (Appendix 7) provided marketers with the perceived strengths and weaknesses of Melbourne as a destination, thus providing information to strengthen its competitive advantage. *Question ‘B’* (Appendix 7) identified recommendations participants would like to see implemented in both parks and Melbourne as a destination. This would allow

visitors to view Melbourne as more 'user friendly' and 'competitive' for their limited time.

#### **5.4.1 Marketing**

In most regions, participants were aware of the 'Jigsaw' campaign for Victoria and there were several recommendations for Melbourne and the metropolitan surrounds to adopt a similar campaign. This would increase awareness of the variety of its attractions. If Parks Victoria adopted a broad campaign, it may not be able to represent the diversity Melbourne offers amongst the metropolitan parks. Such a campaign may result in some parks being undervalued and in others it may create unrealistic visitor expectations. Parks Victoria publishes a brochure with all metropolitan parks along with their facilities/features. However, the placement and therefore availability of this material has been questioned by the participants of this study.

#### **5.4.2 Promotion through Printed Media**

Raising awareness need not be expensive. Perdue and Pitegoff (1990) divided destination promotion into three categories:

- 1) Promotions before potential visitors leave their homes,
- 2) Promotions en route, and
- 3) Promotions once at a destination.

A key finding of this thesis was that the collection of information predominantly occurs before people leave their home regions. Therefore, distribution of information in the regions is vital. Parks Victoria utilises information centres to distribute publications such as their *Guide to Victoria's parks, reserves and waterways*. However, there is an ideal opportunity to enhance the relationship between Parks Victoria and visitor information centres in the regions. Regular, improved communication may help prioritise parks. Through such relationships there may be more opportunity for staff at regional centres to actively promote metropolitan parks when people request information about Melbourne.



The availability and distribution of publications was questioned by the metropolitan focus groups. A recommendation that came from an in-depth interview was for parks to have more presence in event guides. The benefits of event guides are that they are a concise publication with up to date information, maps, general information about activities, current events, transport and places to eat. Event guides however, have the perennial problem of becoming out of date very quickly. Consequently, it would be more useful to advertise regularly in a regional publication. Focus group participants suggested ideas for the best places to advertise. They concluded that the most effective media is the local paper. Parks could feature in local papers on a regular basis.

To reach the family market, advertising or producing a feature article in publications such as *Melbourne's Child* would be appropriate. This monthly publication provides valuable information regarding activities and events that are child-centred in Melbourne CBD and suburban areas. With a circulation of 120,000 this publication has a wide distribution. Being a free newspaper it has a high awareness level amongst metropolitan Melbourne families. *Melbourne's Child* is distributed regionally to Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Inverloch, Phillip Island and Wonthaggi. Results by Nichols and Snepenger (1999) imply that joint-decision-making families participate in many recreational activities and advertisements should incorporate families engaging in the range of outdoor opportunities available, including hiking and visiting parks.

A specific publication for the senior market sector is *Fifty~Plus News* or *The Australian Senior*. Both publications are available free and already attract advertisements from nature based tour operators. *Fifty~Plus News* is a Victorian distributed paper reaching over 50,000 people. *The Australian Senior* has a readership of over 800,000 Australia wide.

### **5.4.3 Partnerships**

With the high level of competition between attractions within Melbourne it is vital that park awareness is heightened. The enquiry into current marketing and partnerships revealed that Parks Victoria is actively involved with a variety of organisations (Table 4.9) however, there are possible partnership alternatives that may be considered in the future.

Section 5.3.1 discusses the option to identify unique park qualities with the aim to differentiate Parks Victoria parks from other parks. Parks Victoria could partner with council managed parks and those managed by other agencies, to encourage visitation regardless of ownership. Using promotional opportunities in the popular parks that exist in Melbourne's metropolitan area to bolster those less frequently visited.

Another alternative is to help visitors make links by association with key events such as; 'utilising the Australian Tennis Open walkway along the Yarra River bank which passes 'Birrarung Marr'. This would involve organisers of the Australian Open, City of Melbourne and Parks Victoria collaborating to see how this could be integrated into promotional material. Park information accompanying event notification, in advance of a visit, would heighten the awareness of parks, their attractions and their proximity to other attractions.

By working in partnership or conjunction with other organisations, Parks Victoria can increase their range of advertising or strategically place advertisements or feature articles to accompany event notification. Parks could seek to be a supporting activity for a premier event or incorporate advertising with nature-based operators. For example, bicycle riding, as an activity, has gained momentum. By partnering with an organisation such as Bike Ride Victoria, parks could broaden their awareness campaign whilst utilising an existing feature of many metropolitan parks, namely bike paths. Such partnerships provide mutual benefits and need to be associated with appropriate activities or events.

#### **5.4.4 Local Government**

Using a direct marketing approach, the 2004 Darebin TravelSmart campaign has proven to be successful in altering the leisure and commuting choices made by people (City of Darebin, 2005). Although their aim was to alter the perception of public transport, the campaign has had an additional impetus in encouraging local residents to make more use of the natural resources within their municipality. Raising park awareness with local residents would provide improved local knowledge, which can in turn lead to repeat visitation and word-of-mouth recommendations.

The TravelSmart program targeted 27,000 households in the suburbs of Northcote, Alphington, Fairfield, Thornbury, Preston and part of Reservoir within the City of Darebin (City of Darebin, 2005). The TravelSmart campaign comprised of a partnership between the Victorian Government: 'TravelSmart', Metlink and the Australian Government's 'Australian Greenhouse Office'. IndiMark®, the marketing method utilised, is a direct marketing campaign to encourage travel behaviour change. Personal incentives, such as backpacks and pedometers, information and advice are offered to potential mode switchers to encourage change (TravelSmart, 2003). Parks in this region have benefited as a byproduct of the TravelSmart campaign which promoted awareness of the entire municipality's natural features.

With the success TravelSmart campaigns around Australia and the realisation that fuel prices are certain to remain at a high price, more municipalities may consider promoting sustainable options. As such, Parks Victoria has an opportunity to be part of a more strategic intervention, utilising the direct marketing approach to reach non-park users. Park management agencies need to be proactive in the provision of park information.

Park information could be facilitated through information volunteers. The Sydney airport volunteer information providers were seen as an excellent source of word-of-mouth recommendations. Melbourne has adopted an ambassador program which should alleviate some of the confusion expressed by the regional focus groups. This program

provides information volunteers, located on Melbourne's city streets, who guide people to activities in the CBD. Such volunteers could be encouraged to make suggestions to visit parks.

#### **5.4.5 Health Campaigns**

Parks Victoria has existing partnerships with the health sector including Asthma Victoria, National Heart Foundation and Arthritis Victoria. Parks Victoria's current campaign is 'Healthy Parks, Healthy People'. With the rising incidence of health disorders, such as obesity, opportunities are needed to increase physical activity which can help act as a preventative measure (Szwarc, 2004). There are many initiatives in place that target inactivity. Park visitation is predominately a free activity that caters for a range of ages, groups and mobility levels. Parks Victoria could seize the opportunity to promote their parks as venues to increase activity levels. Parks have an opportunity to raise their profile, promote their functionality and contribute to the well-being of whole communities.

With the rising levels of obesity and related diseases, the state government is investing in initiatives to get people active. Sport and Recreation Victoria (2005) state that “*Go for your life*’ is an initiative of the Victorian State Government to encourage all Victorians to lead healthier, more active and involved lives”. Part of this initiative is to promote opportunities for community groups and families to become more active. Victorian Deaf Society, Glendonald Residents Group Inc, Aboriginal Community Elders Services, Ethnic Chinese Happy Age Association of Victoria and Brotherhood Community Care are all groups who have organised activities ranging from Tai Chi to walking groups. With several community groups utilising the Victorian Government grant money, Parks Victoria may use this as an opportunity to promote their venues and form yet more partnerships. By providing activities that have health benefits, parks could in turn bolster their visitor numbers.

If considering a micro setting, physical activity is influenced by teachers, parents and community role models. By raising awareness and influencing a variety of community representatives, there is more opportunity for interpersonal facilitators. Family responsibilities were listed as a constraint by several participants in this study. They felt there were limited opportunities for whole family activities. Parks Victoria needs to raise the level of awareness of available opportunities for family groups.

#### 5.4.6 Marketing Summary

Parks Victoria has established strong partnerships with various organisations as displayed in Table 4.9. Their marketing portfolio is very comprehensive. This thesis sought to identify any gaps that may help raise levels of awareness as addressed by participants in this study. Table 5.1 summarises marketing recommendations for Parks Victoria. Based on the findings of this study, Parks Victoria has a variety of mediums to promote their parks either through partnerships or printed material.

**Table 5.1: Marketing Recommendations for Parks Victoria**

Aims	Recommendations	
	Metropolitan	Regional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.</li> <li>• Improve awareness of activities in parks.</li> <li>• Encourage initial visitation to parks</li> </ul>	<p><b>Printed material:</b> Melbourne's Child; 'Fifty~Plus News' or 'The Australian Senior'; Local paper</p> <p><b>Events:</b> Community events</p> <p><b>Partnerships:</b> TravelSmart Community events; Government initiatives to promote improved health.</p>	<p><b>Printed material:</b> Local and National Newspapers Brochure placement in information centres in regional areas; Event Guides: 'This week in Melbourne' and 'Discover Melbourne and Victoria'.</p> <p><b>Events:</b> Partner advertising: parks whose proximity is close to attraction or specific event.</p> <p><b>Partnerships:</b> Information centres in regional areas</p>

## 5.5 Conclusion about the Research Problem

*There is a decline in the numbers of visitors to Melbourne's metropolitan parks as shown by Parks Victoria research in the period 2001 to 2003.*

The 'constraints theory' described by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) helped identify the obstacles potential visitors have, with particular reference to the manner in which they negotiate. One of the research questions was to determine perceived constraints. Using Crawford, Jackson and Godbey's (1991) constraints theory, these perceived constraints were divided into structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints. Although virtually all participants described some form of structural constraint limiting their use of parks, they all agreed that these obstacles could be overcome.

One of the prime constraints identified was a **lack of information** (both awareness and availability). Therefore, although the constraints hierarchy (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991) suggests interpersonal constraints must be negotiated before an individual can progress to the next level; the two forms of constraints are likely to overlap. It is difficult therefore to determine whether structural constraints are any less important than interpersonal constraints. However, this thesis supports Raymore's (2002) suggestion about the importance of facilitators to help motivate others.

This thesis supported Raymore's (2002) 'framework for facilitators' by concentrating on placing opportunity before an individual to encourage participation. If an individual is made more aware of opportunities through information provision as opposed to information seeking, the process can be progressed more quickly. This lessens the amount of time intrapersonal constraints hold a person back from inclusion.

This thesis considered the importance of friends or relatives residing in Melbourne as harbouring both emotional significance and an external influence on the decision to travel. This thesis has considered the facilitating role of the host. The role and value of

the host may need to be reconsidered by marketers however, there is a need for more research within this sector.

Another reason for the decline identified by Parks Victoria is the level of importance that parks receive whilst visitors are on a short break. Potential visitors rated alternative attractions and activities as being more important. With the number of activity choices available in Melbourne, parks are competing in a highly competitive market, therefore they need to consider their competitive advantage. The low cost of visiting a park and the variety of parks in the Parks Victoria portfolio are just two such advantages that could be promoted.

Participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews provided rich information about their current information sources, destination image, attractions mix and the constraints they face in relation to travel and activity choice. They also provided essential time use information. Metropolitan parks can utilise this opportunity to provide a venue/activity for an unoccupied window of time. The level of priority given to a park visit appeared to be low. However, by placing more emphasis on targeting specific market sectors, for example, families and seniors, repeat visitation and word-of-mouth recommendations should result. This in turn will raise the profile of parks as word-of-mouth is often one of the strongest influences on decision making.

## **5.6 Limitations**

This thesis was conducted within the parameters agreed to by Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria, City of Melbourne, Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) and La Trobe University. Due to lengthy delays in ethics approval regarding the remittance regional participants should receive and the selection process desired by the partner organisations, this left very little time in which to assemble focus groups.

### *Regional Perspective*

It is appropriate to point out that focus group studies possess some key limitations. Focus groups are designed to provide a snapshot of public opinion and are primarily intended to seek out underlying concerns and developing trends. Samples of 40 participants from a few selected regional centres cannot be considered a representative sample of all regional Victoria. However, implementing the chosen sampling design for this study, general concerns and growing trends were revealed.

The services of Millward Brown to recruit the regional groups were essential as they were able to access their database of reliable and willing volunteers. This however, did narrow the age parameters. Ideally, the eldest age bracket would have had representation from 65 years and over representing a more senior viewpoint. As there is a large difference in life experiences within the 18 – 34 age range, this would ideally have been divided using the four of the twelve NVS age ranges which are; 15-19 years, 20-24 years, 25-29 years, 30-34 years, 35-39 years, 40-44 years, 45-49 years, 50-54 years, 55-59 years, 60-64 years, 65-69 years and 70+ years (NVS, 2002). Ten of the eleven CPM age ranges correspond exactly with seven NVS age ranges so there is a level of conformity.

### *Metropolitan Perspective*

The organisation of focus groups was designed to have a cross representation of males and females for the age categories. Very few participants volunteered for the metropolitan focus groups and of those, the majority were female: 12 females to 3 males. Without the numbers of volunteers, age categories needed to be broad, however as shown in Table 4.4 there was a good representation across the age categories.

Limitations to the metropolitan focus group selection method included a poor response to the publications used. There may have also been a lack of awareness of such publications. There was likelihood that all of the participants would have been employees or students of La Trobe University however friends and relatives who are linked with the university



passed the information to external people. As there was a low uptake of volunteers, an advertisement in a local newspaper was investigated but this option was deemed too expensive to utilise.

The value of attracting participants who acted as hosts was more important than the location from which their visitors originated. Although the initial question was not specific to accommodating regional Victorians, the detail in the advertisement made specific reference to regional Victorians. This may have had an impact on the number of volunteers. Although there were sufficient numbers (fourteen participants) there was not a sufficient number in which to balance the gender bias.

## **5.7 Further Research**

Recommendations for future research include conducting a more comprehensive investigation into the success of partnerships. Enhancing the partnership between Parks Victoria, health sector organisations and educational institutions is worth investigating. With the population of Australia demonstrating lower levels of physical exercise and a rise in sedentary home-based activities, more use could be made of park settings. An investigation into the successful elements of past campaigns such as ‘Healthy Parks, Healthy People’ and the changes in societal attitudes of particular market segments could inform the development of a strategic campaign to improve wellbeing. The aging population of Australia will have an impact on leisure preferences. Further investigation into facilities and leisure preferences of this segment of the population will be necessary. A marketing strategy could be developed and tested to see if it raises visitation over a period of time or even raises awareness of the parks existence and facilities.

With regard to home leisure, a detailed investigation into leisure purchases for the home could be conducted. This should include the need for external recreation venues if house sizes are increasing, leaving limited outdoor space for recreation within the home confines. This may identify a trend away from outdoor recreation or it may position parks as a marketable proposition in future. A study investigating the sphere of influence for

regional centres would highlight competitive destinations. Future studies could take the destination images compiled by the focus groups and complete a quantitative study investigating Melbourne's strengths and weaknesses with regard to the attractions mix.

As time use once in Melbourne was subjective and based on memory recall, a time use study specifically targeting regional visitors in Melbourne on short breaks would confirm their assumptions of available free time.

## **5.8 Concluding Statement**

The thesis identified a need to investigate the reasons for park visitation decline in Melbourne's metropolitan parks. A theoretical framework was drawn from consumer behaviour and constraint theories. The conceptual framework was further developed using the CPM information. Four research questions were developed focussing on Melbourne as a destination, park constraints and awareness and practical solutions to encourage future visitation.

It was concluded that Melbourne was a preferred destination primarily for VFR motives. There were several confirmed constraints; available time and awareness were perceived as core constraints. Although transport and distance were not included in Raymore's (2002) model or in Crawford, Jackson and Godbey's (1991) constraints theory, these two interrelated variables were identified by this thesis as being additional key constraints. The impact that differing constraints and facilitators have on individuals is dynamic and varies depending on an individual's motives, personality and life stage. Therefore, no one individual factor could be attributed to the decline that Parks Victoria experienced between 2000 and 2003.

The thesis identified facilitators to participation and confirmed the influential role of family and friends. The decline in park visitor numbers can be closely linked to both competing activities and the limited amount of time a short break visitor has.

Improved awareness of park opportunities that complement other urban tourism experiences is important for both regional and metropolitan visitors. It was identified that the opportunity to raise awareness begins at the point of origin, as the majority of participants obtained information prior to departure. Several recommendations for Parks Victoria have been proposed with particular reference to information provision at the point of departure along with improving local community awareness.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1:

#### Parks Victoria Parks in Melbourne

1. Albert Park	41. National Rhododendron Gardens
2. Alfred Nicholas Gardens	42. Nioka Bush Camp
3. Arthurs Seat State Park	43. Nortons Park
4. Aura Vale Lake Park	44. Organ Pipes National Park
5. Baluk Willam Flora Reserve	45. Patterson River
6. Banksia Park	46. Pettys Orchard
7. Birrarung Park	47. Pipemakers Park
8. Braeside Park	48. Pirianda Garden
9. Brimbank Park	49. Point Cook Coastal Park
10. Bushy Park Wetlands	50. Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary
11. Candlebark Park	51. Point Gellibrand Coastal Heritage Park
12. Cape Schanck Lighthouse Reserve	52. Port Phillip
13. Cardinia Reservoir Park	53. Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park
14. Cheetham Wetlands	54. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary
15. Churchill National Park	55. RJ Hamer Arboretum
16. Collins Settlement Historic Site	56. Shepherds Bush
17. Coolart Wetlands and Homestead	57. Silvan Reservoir Park
18. Dandenong Police Paddocks Reserve	58. SkyHigh Mount Dandenong Observatory
19. Dandenong Ranges National Park	59. Sorrento Pier
20. Edward Point State Faunal Reserve	60. St Kilda Pier
21. George Tindale Memorial Gardens	61. Stony Creek Backwash
22. Greenvale Reservoir Park	62. Sugarloaf Reservoir Park
23. Hawkstowe Park	63. Sweeneys Flat
24. Herring Island Environmental Sculpture Park	64. The Gurdies Nature Conservation Reserve
25. Horseshoe Bend Farm	65. The Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve
26. Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve	66. Toorourrong Reservoir Park
27. Jawbone Marine Sanctuary	67. Upper Yarra Reservoir Park
28. Jells Park	68. Warrandyte State Park
29. Kalorama Park	69. Wattle Park
30. Karkarook Park	70. Werribee Park
31. Koomba Park	71. Westerfolds Park
32. Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve	72. Westgate Park
33. Longridge Park Camp	73. William Ricketts Sanctuary
34. Lysterfield Park	74. Woodlands Historic Park
35. Maribyrnong River	75. Yan Yean Reservoir Park
36. Maroondah Reservoir Park	76. Yarra Bend Park
37. Middle Gorge Park	77. Yarra Flats
38. Mornington Peninsula National Park	78. Yarra River
39. Mount Dandenong Arboretum	79. Yarrambat Park
40. Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary	80. Yellow Gum Park

Source: Parks Victoria (2005b)

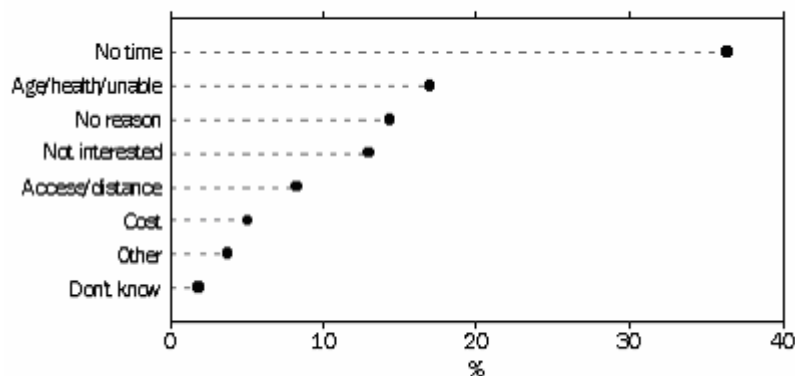
### Parks Victoria Metropolitan Parks in Melbourne

1. Albert Park	17. Longridge Park Camp
2. Aura Vale Lake Park	18. Lysterfield Park
3. Banksia Park	19. Middle Gorge Park
4. Birrarung Park	20. Nioka Bush Camp
5. Braeside Park	21. Nortons Park
6. Brimbank Park	22. Pettys Orchard
7. Bushy Park Wetlands	23. Pipemakers Park
8. Candlebark Park	24. Point Gellibrand Coastal Heritage Park
9. Cheetham Wetlands	25. Shepherds Bush
10. Hawkstowe Park	26. Sweeneys Flat
11. Herring Island Environmental Sculpture Park	27. Wattle Park
12. Horseshoe Bend Farm	28. Westerfolds Park
13. Jells Park	29. Yarra Bend Park
14. Kalorama Park	30. Yarra Flats
15. Karkarook Park	31. Yarrambat Park
16. Koomba Park	32. Yellow Gum Park

Source: Parks Victoria (2005b)

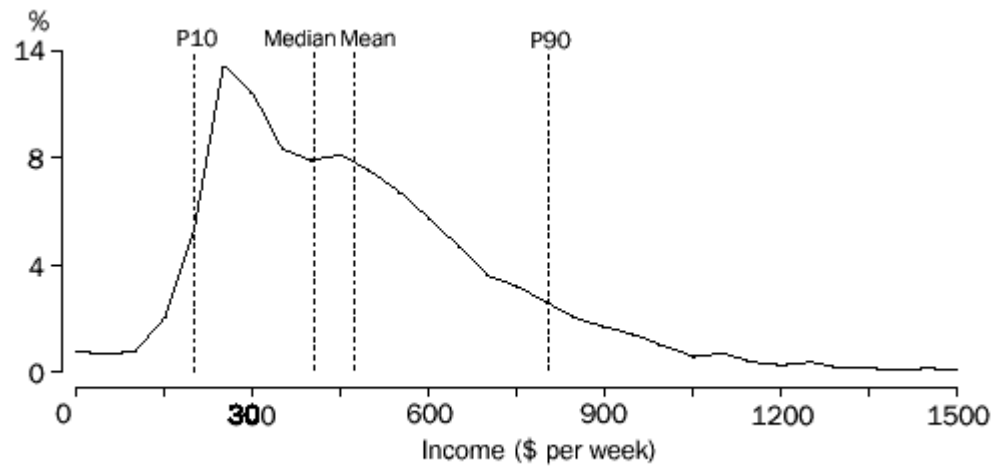
### Appendix 2:

#### Main Reason for Not Visiting a World Heritage Area or Park in Australia - 2001



Source: Environmental Issues. People's Views and Practices, March 2001 (4502.0) in  
(ABS 2003e)

**Appendix 3:**  
**Distribution of Equivalised Disposable Household Income 2000-01**



Note: In this graph income is presented in \$50 ranges.

Source: ABS (2004b)

**Appendix 4: Percentage Participation in Activities for Australia Women and Men NRPS**

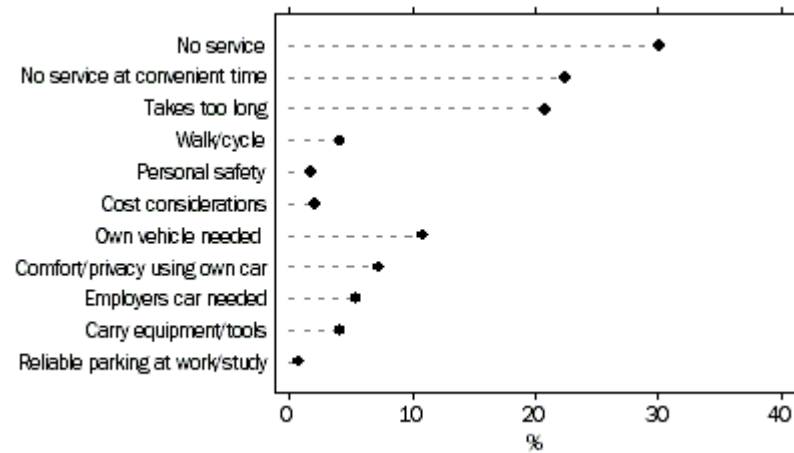
**1991**

Activity	Women	Men
<i>Home Based</i>		
Art and Craft	27.1	15.6
Entertaining	38.9	32.6
Gardening	43.6	39.0
Music	66.9	63.3
Phoning friends	61.1	36.3
Radio	75.5	77.1
Reading	76.2	64.5
Relaxing	57.9	58.0
<i>Outside venues</i>		
Aerobics	8.6	2.2
Swimming	17.8	13.2

Source: Veal and Lynch (2001)

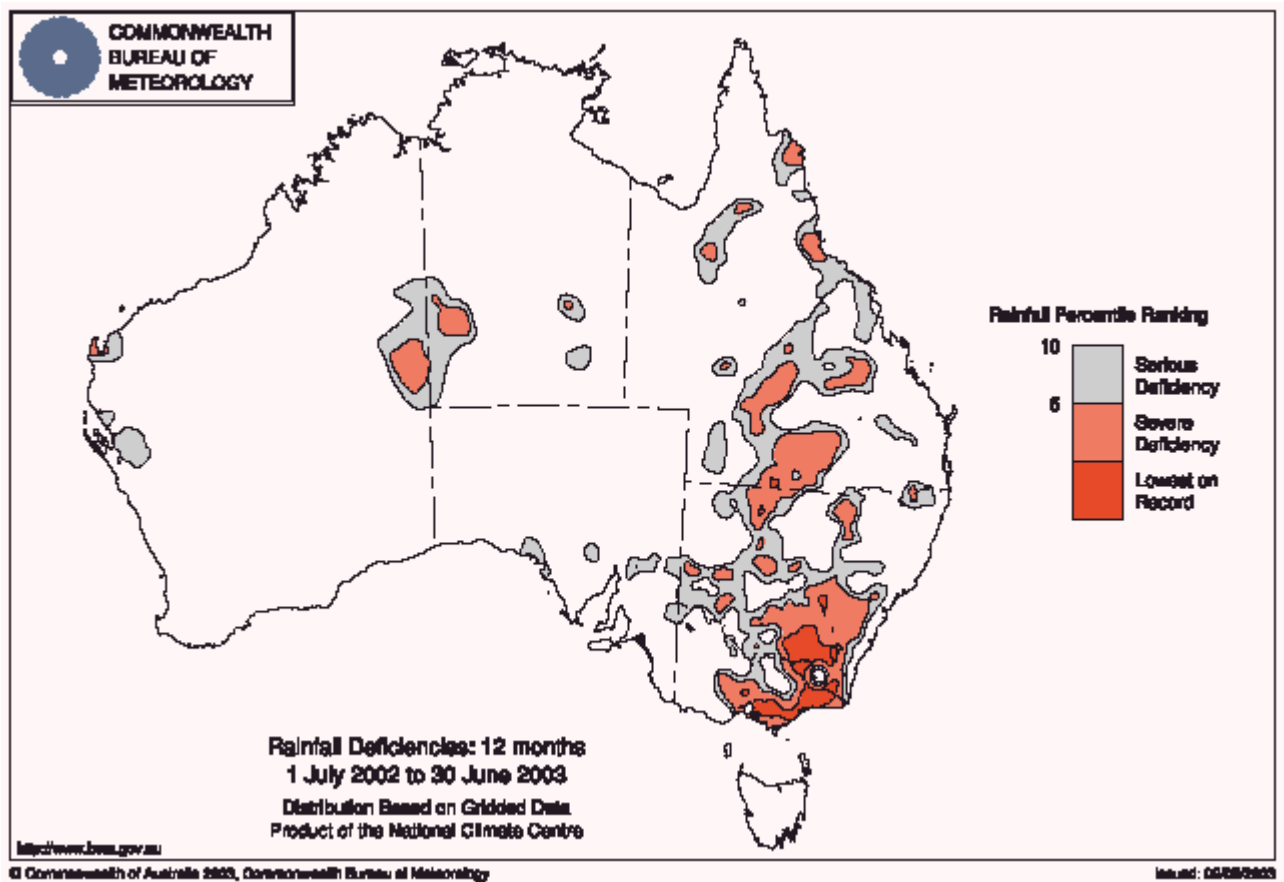


## Appendix 5: Reasons For Not Using Public Transport—March 2003



Source ABS (2003e)

## Appendix 6: Rainfall Deficiency- 2002-03



Source: BOM 2003c cited in ABS (2004c)

## Appendix 7: Moderators Regional Guide

<b>Date:</b>		<b>Tools</b>	<b>Focus group</b>
<b>Topic:</b> Visitation to Melbourne	<b>Description</b>	Tape recorder Blank tapes	<b>Time;</b> 2 hours
<b>Introduction</b> Including pre-meeting drinks	Duration is a maximum of 2 hours.  Main objectives of the session: To obtain opinions from regional people regarding the key motivators, facilitators and constraints for travel to Melbourne.  With your consent we would like to audio tape the discussion. -consent forms and confidentiality  Participant introductions (although when analysing your feedback your name will not be used.)	OHP Pre-printed transparencies Blank transparencies Pens  Forms	5-10 minutes
<b>Warm-up</b>	Please consider your ideal short getaway break. What would you like to do and where would you like to stay?		5-10 minutes
<b>Details and Feedback</b>	<p>Parks Victoria conducts a survey every year to determine the use of parks, cultural attractions and bays and piers. Based on the findings that have been tabulated over the past three years it would appear that regional Victorians are not travelling as frequently to Melbourne. We have asked you to help us formulate some ideas and express your opinions about this issue.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Focus group questions:</i></p> <p>Focus group questions as agreed by La Trobe University, Parks Victoria and Tourism Victoria representatives.</p> <p><b>a) Awareness/Interest in Melbourne</b></p> <p>“Either, when you last had a ‘short stay visit’ (3 days/2 nights) to Melbourne what did you do and where did you stay? OR if you were planning a short stay visit what would you consider doing and where would you stay?”</p> <p>Probes –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are rival destinations for Melbourne?</li> <li>2. How many ‘short breaks’ a year do you manage?</li> <li>3. What activities are the priorities?</li> <li>4. What would attract you to Melbourne’s parks? Which ones and why?</li> </ol>	Pens/ paper	35 minutes

	<p>5. Who would you stay with when you visit?</p> <p><b>b) Constraints and competition for Melbourne Visits</b></p> <p>“What are the main constraints holding you back from a ‘short break’ visit to Melbourne?”</p> <p>Probes –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cost</li> <li>2. Inconvenience (work pressures, scheduling family)</li> <li>3. Repetition (been there many times)</li> <li>4. ‘Done it all’ (nothing new in town)</li> <li>5. Personal?</li> <li>6. When would you visit: season?</li> </ol> <p>External</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. other destinations more attractive (identify them)</li> <li>2. transport/access conditions</li> <li>3. accommodation opportunities</li> <li>4. lack of information (i.e.: new events, attractions)</li> <li>5. drought and economic conditions</li> </ol> <p><b>c) Preferred Type of Visit and Activities</b></p> <p>Key – “If you were going to Melbourne on a short visit what would you like to do?”</p> <p>Probes –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. type of visit (VFR, city shopping, parks and bays, cultural visit)</li> <li>2. What specific activities would you include (indoor/outdoor, formal/informal, urban/natural)</li> <li>3. Activities for fun, education, personal needs (shopping, personal service), bonding, individual fulfilment.</li> </ol>		<p>35 minutes</p> <p>35 minutes</p>
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Additional comments from participants.</p> <p>In conclusion: Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria and Melbourne City Council will utilise this information to address the key issues raised. The valued input of regional Victorians will benefit this market sector in the future so that constraints can be reduced where possible and incentives/facilitators can be considered and implemented.</p>		<p>5-10 minutes</p>

Source: Adapted from Bruseberg and McDonagh (2003); Greenbaun (1998)

## **Appendix 8: Recruitment Advertisement: Regional Areas**

To whom it may concern,

La Trobe University's school of Tourism and Hospitality is assisting Parks Victoria and the City of Melbourne in a study of what attracts regional Victorians to visit Melbourne. As part of this study representatives from the School of Tourism and Hospitality are visiting select regional centres to conduct small two hour discussions with a cross-section of local residents. These focus group discussions will ask people about recent trips to or plans to visit Melbourne, and the sort of activities undertaken or planned. You have been identified by a local organisation or friend as someone who might like to help us in this study. If you would be interested please contact the School of Tourism and Hospitality, Bundoora for details of the proposed visit to your area at (03) 9479 3770.

The focus group will take approximately two and a half hours of your time and we will serve light refreshments during the discussions. No one will be identified in the group summary and subsequent reports and everyone's opinion and experiences will be treated as valid anonymous commentary to pass on to those hoping to make Melbourne as more attractive place to visit. For your time and trouble we will be happy to pay you a small honorarium of \$70 per person.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Source: Adapted from Professor P. Murphy (*pers.comm.* 22 July 2004)

### Appendix 9: Moderators Metropolitan Guide

<b>Date:</b>		<b>Tools</b>	<b>Focus group</b>
<b>Topic:</b> Visitation to Melbourne	<b>Description</b>	Tape recorder Blank tapes	<b>Time;</b> 2 hours
<b>Introduction</b> Including pre-meeting drinks	Duration is a maximum of 2 hours.  Main objectives of the session: To obtain opinions from regional people regarding the key motivators, facilitators and constraints for travel to Melbourne.  With your consent we would like to audio tape the discussion. -consent forms and confidentiality  Participant introductions (although when analysing your feedback your name will not be used.)	OHP  Pre-printed transparencies  Blank transparencies  Pens  Forms	5-10 minutes
<b>Warm-up</b>	Please consider your last day trip. What was the best part of that trip and what was the worst?		5-10 minutes

<p><b><i>Details and Feedback</i></b></p>	<p>Parks Victoria conducts a survey every year to determine the use of parks, cultural attractions and bays and piers. Based on the findings that have been tabulated over the past three years it would appear that regional Victorians are not travelling as frequently to Melbourne. Those that do travel to Melbourne often stay with friends and relatives. This group has been formulated for three main reasons; 1) to determine how influential the hosts' suggestions are on the visitors, 2) what activities are suggested and 3) what constraints do you face as hosts with regard to making suggestions. We have asked you to help us formulate some ideas and express your opinions about this issue.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Focus group questions:</i></p> <p>Focus group questions as agreed by La Trobe University, Parks Victoria and Tourism Victoria representatives.</p> <p><b><i>a) Awareness/Interest in Melbourne's Metropolitan Parks</i></b></p> <p>"If you had guests staying at your home for a 'short break' involving an overnight stay, where would you go and what would you do?"</p> <p>Probes –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What activities are the priorities?</li> <li>2. What would attract you to Melbourne's parks? Which ones and why?</li> </ol> <p><b><i>b) Constraints and competition for Melbourne metropolitan park Visits</i></b></p> <p>"What factors would hold you back from taking your guests or suggesting they visit a Metropolitan park?"</p> <p>Probes –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cost</li> <li>2. Inconvenience (work pressures, scheduling family)</li> <li>3. Repetition (been there many times)</li> <li>4. Personal?</li> <li>5. Weather/ season?</li> </ol>	<p>Pens/ paper</p>	<p>35 minutes</p> <p>35 minutes</p>
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	<p>External</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. other destinations more attractive (identify them)</li> <li>7. transport/access conditions</li> <li>8. accommodation opportunities</li> <li>9. lack of information (i.e.: new events, attractions)</li> <li>10. drought and economic conditions</li> </ol> <p><i>c) Preferred Type of Visit and Activities</i></p> <p>Key – “If your guests were coming to Melbourne on a ‘short break’ what would you suggest they do?”</p> <p>Probes –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. type of visit (VFR, city shopping, parks and bays, cultural visit)</li> <li>2. What specific activities would you include (indoor/outdoor, formal/informal, urban/natural)</li> <li>3. Activities for fun, education, personal needs (shopping, personal service), bonding, individual fulfilment.</li> </ol>		35 minutes
<b>Summary</b>	<p>Additional comments from participants.</p> <p>In conclusion: Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria and Melbourne City Council will utilise this information to address the key issues raised. The valued input from hosts will benefit the friends and family market sector in the future so that constraints can be reduced where possible and incentives/facilitators can be considered and implemented.</p>		5-10 minutes

Source: Adapted from Bruseberg and McDonagh (2003); Greenbaun (1998)

**Appendix 10:**  
**Codes used for Analysis of Data**

<b>CPM Responses</b>	<b>Core Codes</b>	<b>Sub-codes (1)</b>	<b>Sub-codes (2)</b>
<i>Don't have the time</i>	Available Time	Work	
		Family	
		Time for unplanned activities	
<i>Too far away</i>	Distance	State of roads	
<i>Lack of interest/don't care</i>	Alternative leisure activities	Competitive destinations	
		Competitive attractions	
<i>Don't know where they are</i>	Awareness	Information Sources	Word-of-mouth
			Printed
<i>Don't have the transport</i>	Transport	Private	Dislike city driving
			Parking costs
			Fuel Prices
		Public	
<i>Weather</i>	Seasonality and climate		
<i>Can't afford it / money</i>	Socio-economic considerations		
	Pricing of leisure		
<i>Don't feel safe</i>	Safety Issues		
<i>Disability</i>	Physical Accessibility/ Disability		
<i>Other</i>	Gender Differences		
	Age and Life Stage	Youth	
		Seniors	
	The Influence of Family and Friends	Family groups	
		Information	
	Race and Ethnicity		



## Appendix 11:

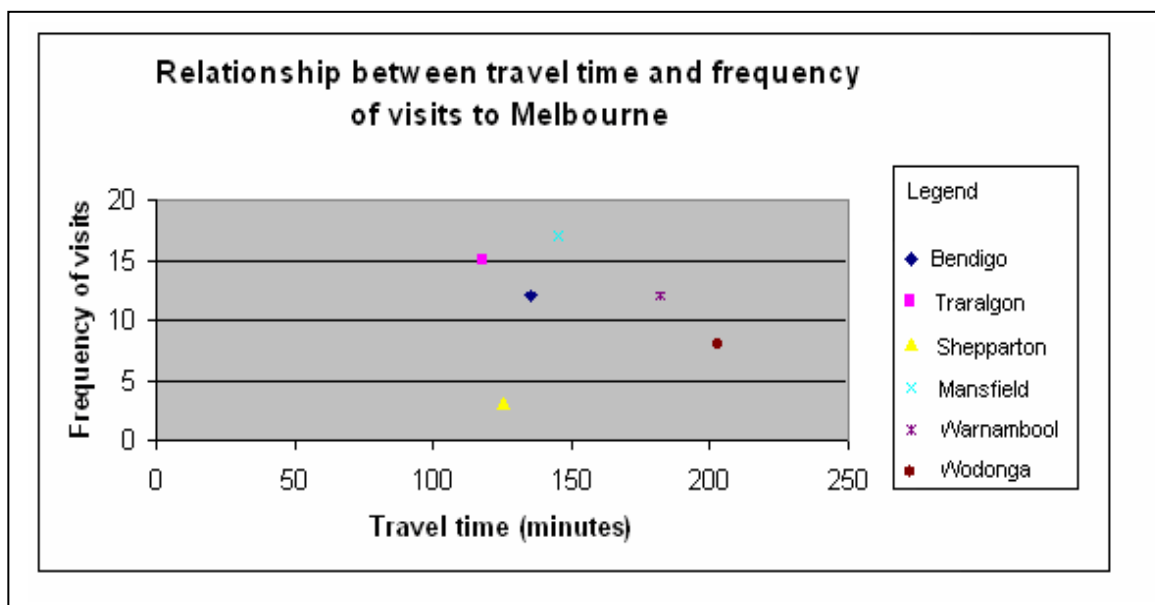
### Relationship between Travel Time and Frequency of Visits to Melbourne over a 12 Month Period

	A	B	Rank A	Rank B	A - B	(A - B) <sup>2</sup>
Regional location	Travel time (minutes)	Number of Visits				
Bendigo	135	12	4	3	1	1
Traralgon	118	15	6	2	4	16
Shepparton	125	3	5	6	-1	1
Mansfield	145	17	3	1	2	4
Warrnambool	182	12	2	3	-1	1
Wodonga	203	8	1	5	-4	16
						Sum(A - B) <sup>2</sup> = 39

Travel Times obtained from: RACV (n.d).

Spearman Rank

$R_s = 0.1((p < 0.05))$



Travel Times obtained from: RACV (n.d).

## Appendix 12:

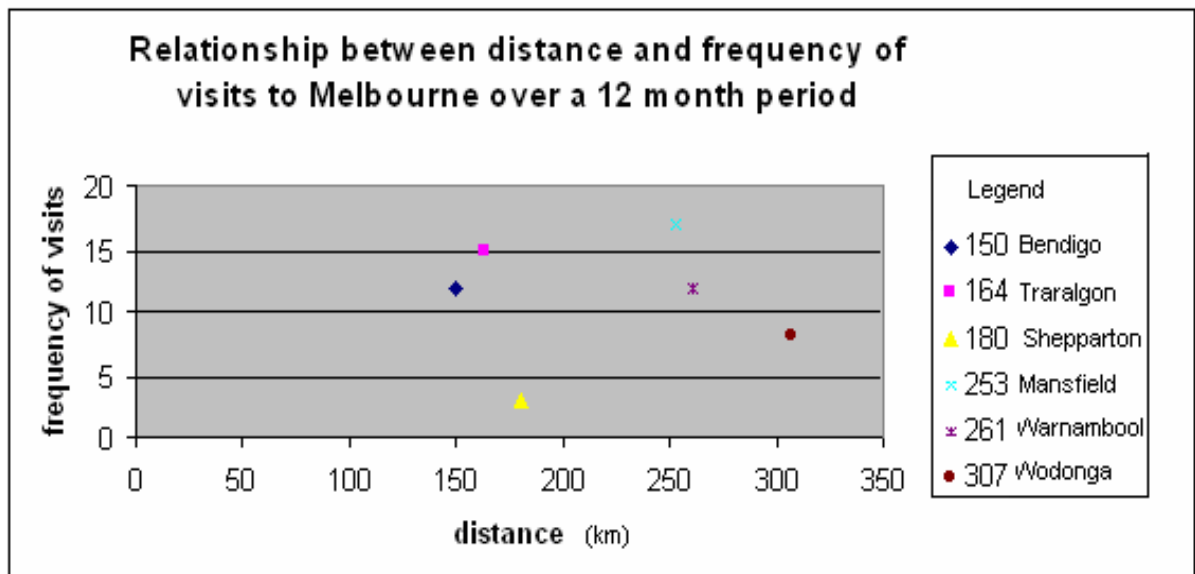
### Relationship between Distance and Frequency of Visits to Melbourne over a 12 Month Period

	A	B	Rank A	Rank B	A - B	(A - B) <sup>2</sup>
Regional location	Distance (KM)	Number of Visits				
Bendigo	150	12	6	3	3	9
Traralgon	164	15	5	2	3	9
Shepparton	180	3	4	6	-2	4
Mansfield	253	17	3	1	2	4
Warrnambool	261	12	2	3	-1	1
Wodonga	307	8	1	5	-4	16
						43
						Sum(A - B) <sup>2</sup>

Distances obtained from:Wheris.com (n.d).

Spearman Rank

$R_s = -0.23$  ( $p < 0.05$ )



Distances obtained from:Wheris.com (n.d).