

Benchmarking and Assessment

**An Australian and New Zealand perspective of
going for the best**

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About Parks Forum



- Peak body for park agencies in Australia and New Zealand
- Purpose: enhance and increase the range of benefits that parks provide to the community
- Programs to adopt best practice, undertaking research, sharing information, knowledge and expertise
- 65 members and partners – urban, regional and PAs
- Health, research and corporate management



Presentation Objectives



- Checklist of evaluation principles
- Review current, successful benchmarking programs in Australia and New Zealand
- Developing benchmarks to address park management, corporate and/or operational aspects
- Identified issues
- Developing standards

Principles of Good Evaluation

- IUCN-WCPA Framework identified 8 principles for developing evaluation methodologies
- Hocking *et al* 2006 guidelines for conducting assessments

Broad Principles

1. Improves protected area management
 - Clear purpose
 - Measures progress, relevant to needs
 - Patterns/trends and identifies improvement areas
2. Methodology is logical and systematic
 - Systematic framework
 - Hierarchy of questions across management areas
 - Assumptions and scoring clearly identified
 - Six elements of protected area management cycle reviewed

Protected Area Management Cycle



From Hocking *et al.*, 2006

Principles of Good Evaluation

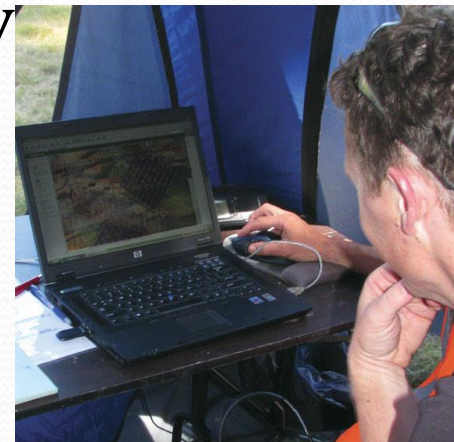
Broad principles cont.

3. Indicators balanced and useful

- Explain cause and effect
- Indicators – measurable, precise, consistent, sensitive

4. Accurate methodology

- A structured and recognised methodology
- Replicable and data can be verified
- Up to date information
- Maintain data resources



Principles of Good Evaluation

Broad principles cont.

5. Practical to implement – balance measuring, reporting and managing
 - Sufficient allocation of resources
 - Uses existing information
 - Language and clear process
 - Simple data entry, analysis and reporting tools
6. Methodology part of management cycle
 - Core business
 - Commitment to repeated evaluations
 - Aligns with planning, monitoring and operational programs
 - Acceptance and action at senior levels

Principles of Good Evaluation

Broad principles cont.

7. Cooperative – good teamwork, communication and participation
 - Different perspectives sought
 - Builds trust between PA and community
8. Positive, timely use of results
 - Discuss how to use and communicate results
 - Benefits and results clearly visible
 - Rapid feedback to participants
 - Results will influence future plans and actions



Australia and New Zealand

- Call for greater transparency
- No single benchmarking process
- IUCN-WCPA Framework “Evaluating Effectiveness – A Framework for Assessing Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas”
- State of the Parks Reporting – NSW and Victoria
- Yardstick – a New Zealand Recreation Association product
- PF - Great Parks Network Benchmarks & Agency Statistics



Parks Forum Programs

- Parks Forum programs to measure effectiveness and improve management of parks
 - Award Program
 - Peer Review Program
 - Annual Agency Statistics
 - Organisational benchmarking



Presentation will focus on the Great Parks Networks
Benchmarks and Agency Statistics program

Agency Statistics – comparing agency metrics

- Rapid assessment , industry wide perspective
- Compare the financial and operational data
- Internal and external comparison
- Trends of simple measures - numbers of parks, staff, visitors and budgets
- Communicate significance –
- 15,500 staff manage 146 million hectares, 20 000 parks and support 280 million park visits

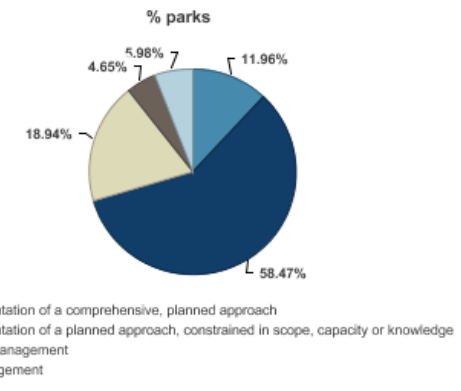


Technology

- GPNB and State of the Parks use on-line surveys

The screenshot shows the 'Survey Details' for Grampians National Park ID: 3316. It includes fields for 'Date of Assessment' (6/08/2010), 'Principle Assessor' (Bonnie Wintle), and 'Additional Assessor' (Add Assessor). It also lists 'RIC(s): Grampians & Black Range, Wimmera', 'District(s): Grampians', and 'Region(s): West'. Below this is a navigation bar with tabs for 'Park Attributes', 'Park Context', 'Management Effectiveness' (selected), and 'Authorisation'. A row of buttons labeled C1 through C32 is visible. Below the buttons are sections for 'C20 Visitor Experience Information', 'Whole of Park Approach Assessment', and 'Assessment 1 - Is information on park visitors in this park sufficient to support planning and decision-making?'. The assessment question has four radio button options. Below the question is a 'Reason for Management' dropdown menu (set to 'Please Select'), an 'Assessors Justification / Comment' text area, and several expandable sections: 'Proposed Priority Actions', 'Source of Information', and 'Review'.

- Multiple assessors
- Charts, tables, pivot tables



GPNB – comparing agency processes

- Measures effectiveness to improve management of parks (P1)
- Across quadruple bottom line & corporate responsibility (e.g. fire) (P2)
- Assessment across management cycle - context, planning, inputs, process, outputs, outcomes (P2)
- Qualitative and quantitative data (e.g. volunteer numbers) (P3)
- Benchmarks that measure currency of management (P3)
- Easy to use survey – on-line with multiple assessors per agency (maximise use of expertise) (P4,5)
- Commitment to repeating the survey (P6)
- Aligned programs to promote improved management and governance (P7,8)

GPNB– Questions

- Questions aligned along the management cycle for each main area
- 72 questions (19 environmental, 8 economic, 11 social, 9 cultural and 25 management)
- Nested questions
 - – cause and effect
- Assumptions specified

A policy (<10 years old) to encourage public input into park management decisions via public consultation programs **exists**.

- Yes
- No
- Unable to estimate

A public consultation program to provide input into park management decisions is **actively implemented**.

- Yes
- Mostly Yes
- No
- Mostly No
- Unable to estimate

GPNB– Questions

Natural Resource Questions

Sufficient information exists to support operational decision making

Existing information is used to allocate resources for decision making

Biodiversity Questions

Existence of policies to guide planning and management

Active implementation of policies

Policy action contributes to improvement of condition/integrity

Biodiversity values are being maintained in excellent condition

GPNB– Participation

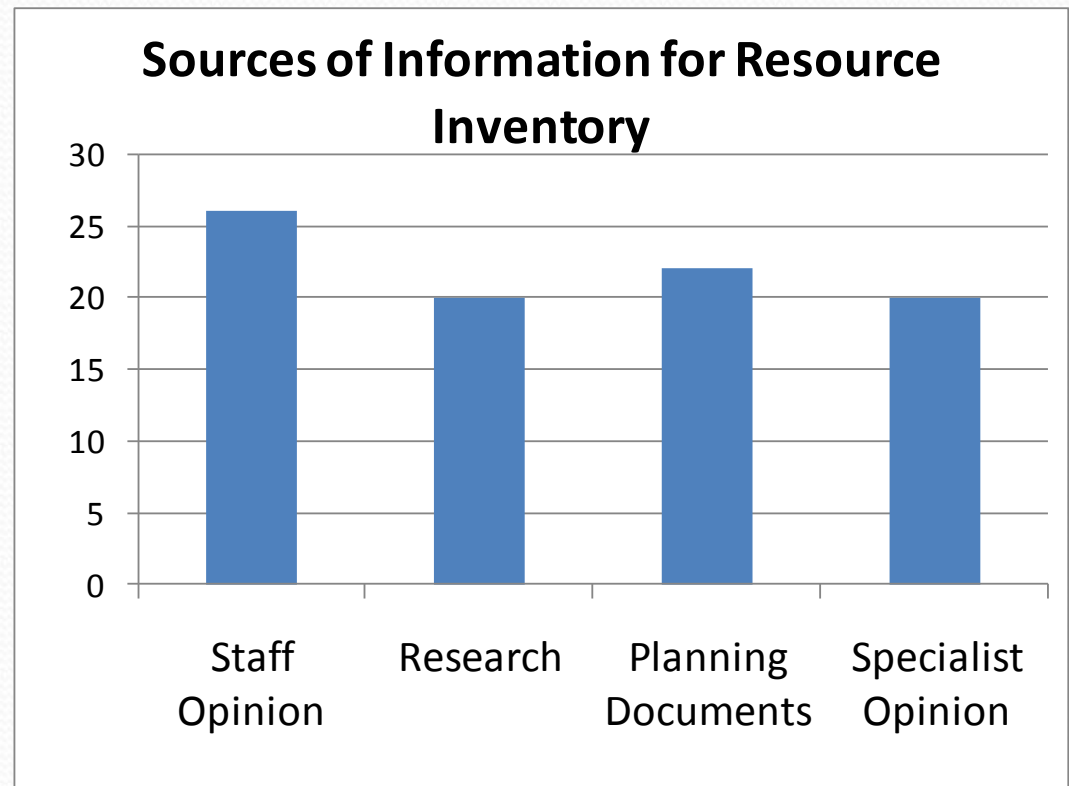
- 61% of 2007 and 63% of 2010 members participated
- 2010– 10 Protected Area, 11 Urban Parks, 5 Regional and Specialist Park Agencies participated
- Approximately, Aus \$30 K to conduct 2007 and 2010 assessment



GPNB– Sources of Information

4 Categories

- Staff experience (all questions)
 - Research (visitor & community satisfaction, demographics surveys)
 - Planning documents (cultural economic, environmental and management)
 - Specialist opinion (> for environmental measures)
- Results indicate sufficient information is available for management decisions



GPNB Results

	Performance measures
Benchmark category	Areas performing well
Environmental	Sufficient information; it used for resource allocation
	Policies exist & contribute to improved biodiversity
Social	Visitor information – visitor facilities maintained
Cultural	Indigenous consultation - active
Management	Organisational management – systems & processes exist
	Risk management
	Training & professional development – training exists
	Operational health & safety – compliance systems exist

GPNB Results

	Performance measures
Benchmark category	Areas for improvement
Economic	Economic benefit to local communities – policy exists, benefit quantified
Cultural	Cultural inventory – Measure implementation of policy
	Demographics – known for visitors, catered for in management
Management	Organisational management – documented performance standards
	Management resources – existence of standards

GPNB Results

Volunteer hours

- 50% of participants could report on volunteer hours
- Minimum of 190,000 hrs, valued at Aus \$4.75 million

Conducting Surveys

- 64 % - visitor satisfaction surveys
- 15% - community satisfaction surveys



Visitor Satisfaction	Percentage
70 – 79 %	20
80 – 89 %	40
90 – 100 %	30
Not Applicable	10

GPNB Observations & Issues

Benefits

- Systematic collection of information across all aspects of park management
- Support and promotion through Industry Agenda
- Commitment to ongoing evaluation

Issues

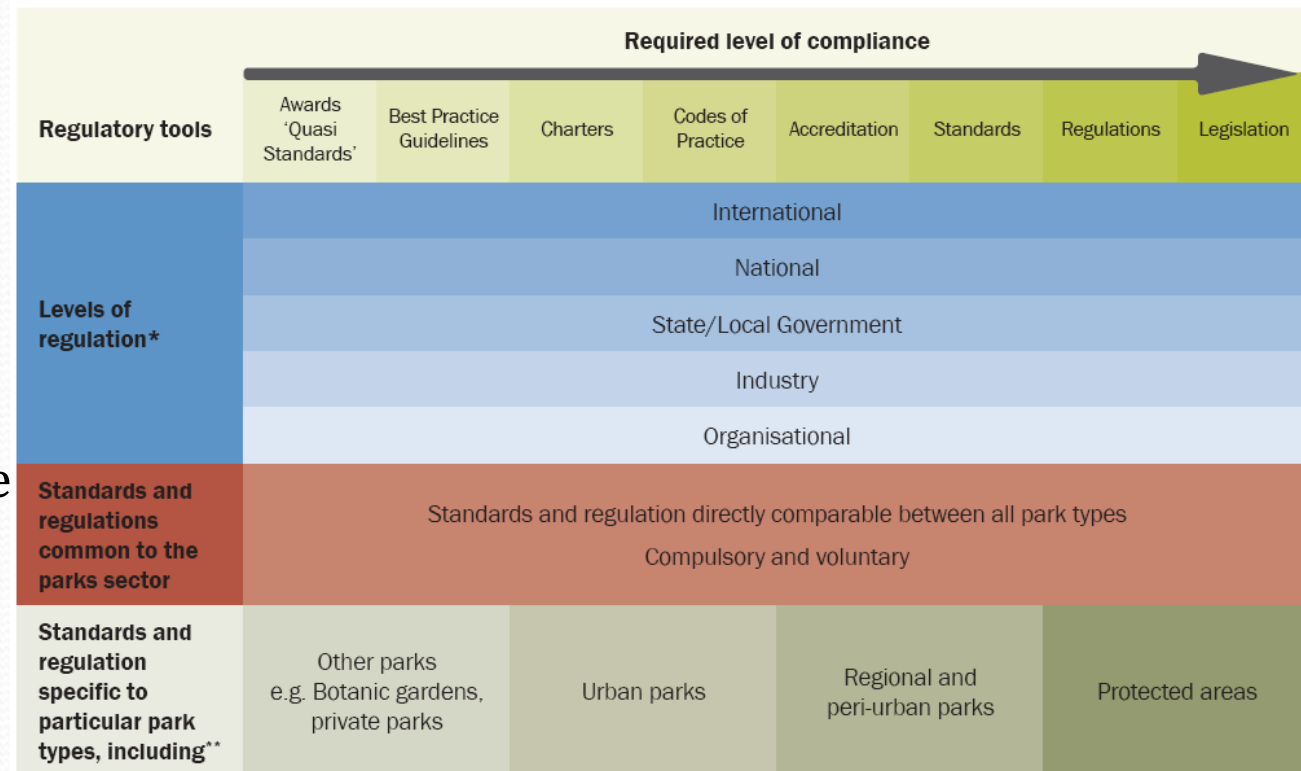
- Difficult to present statistically significant results
- Transparency - aggregated results presented
- Not all areas adequately covered (context, law enforcement)
- Willingness to be a 'learning' organisation and implement change

Standards and Regulatory Framework



Standards and Regulatory Framework

This diagram presents the broad regulatory framework for parks, under which the laws and regulations that outline the legal requirements to be met are described. They may also be complemented by policies, standards and guidelines.



Standards

- Complex governance framework
- Australian and New Zealand Standards – compliance required
- Voluntary codes of practice and standards
- What do we want for the future?

Acknowledgements

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