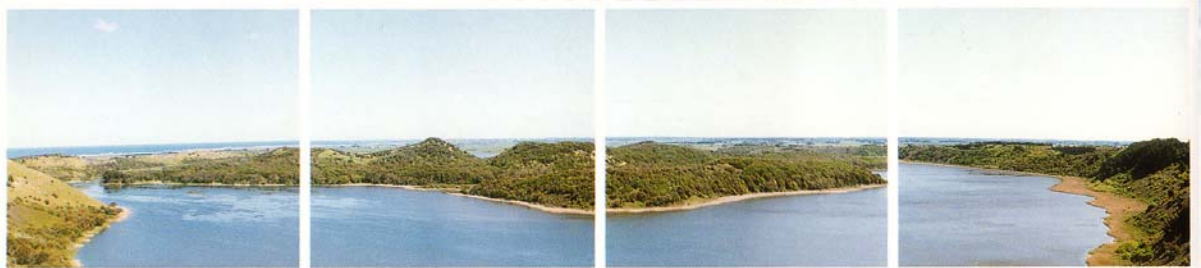




Tower Hill Future Directions Strategy Final Report

August 2002



In association with:
**Robin Crocker & Associates and
Village Well**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks Victoria, Warrnambool City Council and Moyne Shire Council commissioned this Strategy to guide the future direction of Tower Hill State Game Reserve. The Strategy aims to:

- Identify and summarise community concerns and aspirations relevant to the future of the Reserve and Natural History Centre; and
- Identify and analyse options for the future of the Reserve including management of the Natural History Centre.

It has become apparent throughout this Strategy's development that future actions at Tower Hill must involve the community, protect the key values of the site, provide enjoyable visitor experiences and ensure a sustainable future.



The process followed in developing the Strategy included a review of background material, consultation with the local community and other stakeholders, and identification of Tower Hill's key values and key issues for future management. Parks Victoria, Warrnambool City and

Moyne Shire Councils then prioritised a list of possible projects and programs at Tower Hill. This prioritised list, which was included in the Draft Strategy document, was then released for public comment.

After the public submission results were duly incorporated into this Strategy, and further meetings were held with several key stakeholders. These stakeholders included groups associated with the Outdoor Campus and the Bush Foods Trail/s concepts (Refer Section 6.3 and 6.4), the Friends of Tower Hill Inc and community representatives.

A final version of the Strategy was then developed incorporating agreed directions and strategies.

Key Values of Tower Hill

A number of important values were identified during the planning process:

- Landscape and scenic values recognised by the local and wider community and listed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and on the Register of the National Estate.
- Geological values rated as of national significance (a 'nested marr') and listed on the Register of the National Estate.
- Habitat values, including remnant and wetland values.
- Cultural and social values related to the major re-vegetation program involving thousands of volunteers. The program was the first of its kind in Victoria and one of the most ambitious.
- Informal recreation, education, research and wildlife viewing opportunities for local residents and tourists provided in the Reserve's attractive setting.
- Aboriginal heritage values including several significant sites, as well as post European contact heritage values.
- The Natural History Centre (visitor centre), one of the most accessible and important of the late Robin Boyd's designs.

Key Community Concerns, Issues Arising & Strategic Directions

The community has a variety of concerns about Tower Hill. Most of these relate to the perceived fall in the levels of service provided at the

Reserve, and the associated resource allocation shift from staffing to 'contracting out' maintenance and land management activities. Others relate to how the Reserve is interpreted, marketed and operated for the community at large.

The Table overleaf summarises the key community concerns and issues arising for Tower Hill. These have been called 'Challenges'. Also in the table is a statement of strategic direction for each of the five main areas of community concern.

Challenges for Tower Hill Key Concerns, Issues Arising	Strategic Directions for Tower Hill
Visitor & Education Services	
❑ Necessary improvements to visitor and education facilities and services at Tower Hill are limited by competing demands in Parks Victoria for financial resources.	➤ The Reserve will be managed to ensure that visitors have a high quality experience. The Reserve's key values will be supported by well-maintained facilities, and quality web based education material and on site interpretation.
Land Management & Site Protection	
❑ Current land management (weed and pest control, re-vegetation and wildlife management) suffers from lack of agreed objectives and is regarded as unsatisfactory.	➤ Tower Hill's key values will be protected. Clear land management and site protection priorities will be established in consultation with the Advisory Group to guide future activities at Tower Hill.
Use of Visitor Centre	
❑ The Natural History Centre has potential to attract more visits and provide a stronger focal point for interpretation, education, sales and possibly refreshments and tours.	➤ Parks Victoria will work to ensure that quality interpretation services are provided in the Centre. Where possible, Parks Victoria will support activities that increase the staffing of the Centre (by partner agencies and volunteers) and the quality of interpretative material on offer.
Image, Activities & Marketing	
❑ There is a perception that the image of the Reserve has declined locally and new initiatives are needed to improve its profile, e.g. new name, improved road signs and entry, activity programs, events and festivals and cooperative marketing.	➤ Parks Victoria will endeavour to reinforce and improve the existing visitor focal point in the Reserve. Parks Victoria will also work to improve the accessibility of Tower Hill and marketing/ promotional activities that reinforce the Reserve's key values.
Management Partnerships	
❑ Several potential management partnerships	➤ Parks Victoria will work to formalise the

have been identified, involving continued management by Parks Victoria with the cooperation of local councils, groups and organisations.	community engagement process and will act as a coordinating body to ensure that community efforts are appropriately guided and supported.
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Preferred Projects & Programs

A list of possible projects and programs was developed to meet the Challenges facing Tower Hill. The following table lists those projects and programs that were favoured by Parks Victoria, Warrnambool City Council and Moyne Shire Council in the Draft Strategy for public comment.

Favoured Projects in Draft Strategy 1. Investigate preparation and implementation of a landscape master plan for main visitor area and entrance. 2. Upgrade three rim lookouts. 3. Re-develop educational materials and provide some on-site support for educating visits. 4. Undertake seasonal weed control at priority sites and follow up with selected planting and mulching. 5. Provide improved visibility and walking access to visitor centre. 6. Integrate marketing of Tower Hill into regional and local programs. 7. Form Advisory Group, with wide range of members, to provide partnership input, advise on works program and support consultation and promotion. 8. Provide ongoing support for Friends group. 9. Establish 'Outdoor Campus' with Deakin and TAFE providing for research and training.

Wide public support and subsequent stakeholder interest was shown for three particular partnership projects that aligned well with Tower Hill's strategic directions. These included:

The Formation & Support of an Advisory Group, where Parks Victoria would formalise the interaction of local community representatives and stakeholders to ensure that community expectations are identified and met, and so that cooperative projects can be undertaken for Tower Hill's benefit on an ongoing basis.

The Outdoor Campus, where students from South West TaFE and Deakin requiring work placements, training and projects to develop their skills would be provided with opportunities at Tower Hill. Parks Victoria would have to help coordinate the process and supervise students.

The Bush Foods Trail/s, where the Aboriginal community would revegetate agreed areas at Tower Hill with indigenous flora and harvest bush foods from these areas for subsequent sale at Tower Hill. On-site interpretation would also be included, as would increase involvement in Reserve management. Parks Victoria would need to allow access to limited areas of land and provide a base for retail operations.

Conclusions

Strategic directions and a series of projects and programs have been identified to guide the future management of Tower Hill.

Parks Victoria has limited resources to implement these initiatives but there are positive opportunities to form partnerships and involve local organisations and individuals in day-to-day management. Working together, the future of Tower Hill can be assured.

Recommendations

1. Parks Victoria should establish and support an Advisory Group to input to the development of an Environmental Management Plan; input to future management decisions; and assist in the preparation of funding applications for Tower Hill. This will involve developing the Group's charter and membership eligibility criteria, undertaking the recruitment process, and leading and supporting the ongoing operations of the Advisory Group.
2. Parks Victoria, in consultation with community stakeholders, and with business, social and environmental specialists, will develop an agreed Environmental Management Plan to guide conservation and development objectives for Tower Hill. These objectives should be simple in their application and should be widely communicated.
3. Parks Victoria needs to assure potential project partners about its commitment to partnership projects at Tower Hill. To do this, Parks Victoria should draft a Memorandum of Understanding with relevant stakeholders, further investigate project feasibilities and operational requirements, and document detailed action plans and external funding submissions.
4. Building on the outcomes stemming from the above recommendations, Parks Victoria should progressively implement

synergistic, high priority projects and programs - identified in Section 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 - as resources become available.

5. Once the high priority tasks have been completed, Parks Victoria should review the medium and low priority tasks - identified in Sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 - and progressively incorporate these in future annual funding programs.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the Strategy

Victorian Government policy states that government agencies will “encourage participation by community members and organisations in planning, monitoring and evaluating services” and is “committed to rebuilding the sense of community...”

Community involvement has been a critical part of the re-vegetation and redevelopment of Tower Hill State Game Reserve (referred to as Tower Hill in this report) over the last 40 years. Consequently Tower Hill is an integral part of the local Warrnambool, Koroit, and Killarney communities and local stakeholders feel strongly about its long-term future.

In line with these policy directions and past events, the Future Directions Strategy for Tower Hill aims to:

- Identify and summarise community concerns and aspirations relevant to the future of the Reserve and Natural History Centre; and
- Identify and analyse options for the future of the Reserve including management of the Natural History Centre.

1.2 Background to the Strategy

1.2.1 Site History & Context

Tower Hill is located 13km west of Warrnambool in Victoria’s south-west. The site is a spectacular dormant volcano, which is an important focus for tourism and protects a variety of environmental, landscape and cultural values. The Reserve provides visitors with walking tracks, picnic facilities, lookouts and a Natural History Centre which provides a unique venue for environmental and cultural interpretation.

By declaring Tower Hill a ‘national park’ [in name only] in 1892, attempts were made to halt the decline of the once majestic site. However, grazing, cropping, quarrying and rubbish dumping

continued and took their toll. By the 1950s the hills and islands were bare and little wildlife remained.

Subsequently, Tower Hill was declared a State Game Reserve in 1961. A major re-vegetation program then commenced with over 300,000 trees being planted providing new habitats for wildlife that can now be seen in the Reserve. Local volunteers contributed significantly to these revegetation activities.

1.2.2 Key Values

Future development of Tower Hill should protect and build on the key values identified for the Reserve. These are:

- Landscape and scenic values recognised by the local and wider community and listed by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and on the Register of the National Estate.
- Geological values rated as of national significance (a 'nested marr') and listed on the Register of the National Estate.
- Habitat values, including remnant and wetland values.
- Cultural and social values related to the major re-vegetation program involving thousands of volunteers. The program was the first of its kind in Victoria and one of the most ambitious.¹
- Informal recreation, education, research and wildlife viewing opportunities for local residents and tourists provided in the Reserve's attractive setting.
- Aboriginal heritage values including several significant sites, as well as post European contact heritage values.
- The Natural History Centre (visitor centre), one of the most accessible and important of the late Robin Boyd's designs.

¹ On the plaque at Tower Hill different groups are thanked for their work: Warrnambool Field Naturalists Club; Port Fairy, Warrnambool and Hopkins Apex Clubs; Warrnambool Brownies; Heywood, Yambuk and Hamilton Girl Guides; Cooriemungle Prison Farm; Country Women's Association; Warrnambool Field and Game association; Warrnambool Presbyterian Fellowship; YMCA; Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers; Telecom Australia; A.V. Jennings; and many schools of the district". (Source: John & Moore (1992:38).

1.2.3 Visitor and Community Perceptions

A recent survey (Jan 2001) in the Reserve and comments in the visitor's book in the Natural History Centre indicate that many visitors enjoy their visit. The survey of 100 visitors found that 89% were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. At this time the Reserve rated higher than all other parks and reserves included in the survey.

Some local concern has been expressed about the recent decline (i.e. since Jan 2001) in management standards and resourcing and this has been incorporated into the planning process for future activities at Tower Hill.

1.3 Development of the Strategy

SGS Economics & Planning in association with Robin Crocker & Associates and Village Well (the 'Consulting Team') were commissioned to prepare this Future Directions Strategy.

The Consultant Brief stipulated six key tasks:

Task 1: Review of Background Material

Section 2 of this Strategy summarises relevant background information. Importantly, the management imperatives that need to be addressed by any development actions/programs for Tower Hill are identified in this section.

Task 2: Community Consultation

This task included attendance at a Public Forum held at Tower Hill and interviews with key stakeholders and community representatives for the purpose of identifying community 'concerns' and 'aspirations' relevant to the future of the Reserve. The key findings from this consultation process are outlined in Section 3 of this Strategy.

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis is presented in Section 4 of the Strategy. It draws from the information collected in the background review and community consultation

process. Statements of strategic direction are also developed so that the key issues can be tackled in a coordinated manner.

Task 3: Scope Development Opportunities

The results of Tasks 1 and 2 are drawn together in Section 5 as development projects or programs. A brief description of each project/ program is provided, as is an overview of the project's/ program's advantages, constraints, potential partners, and resourcing requirements.

These development opportunities were presented to Parks Victoria, Moyne Shire Council and Warrnambool City Council for initial prioritisation. Priorities are indicated in Section 5.

Task 4: Community Input

Following this prioritisation by the Plan funding stakeholders, a Draft Strategy was issued for public comment. The comments received have been incorporated in this Strategy where appropriate. A summary of public comments is attached in Appendix C.

Task 5: Scope Partnership Opportunities

Section 6 takes the preferred partnership projects that emerged during Tasks 1 to 4, and describes how each of the projects contributes to Tower Hill's development. These projects include the Outdoor Campus and Bush Foods Trail/s concepts as well as the formation of an Advisory Group and the communication of clear development priorities to regional stakeholders.

Task 6: Recommendations

After consideration of all written and verbal submissions, the Strategy recommends a variety of activities to guide future management and development of Tower Hill. These recommendations should be viewed as actions necessary to maintain the ongoing involvement of regional stakeholders.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Scope of Information

The Future Directions Strategy for Tower Hill must take account of government policy, the results of past research and the activities of others in the region. Tower Hill does not exist in a vacuum.

As a result, Parks Victoria asked the Consulting Team to review a number of background documents. These include the strategic plans and policies of this Strategy's financial stakeholders, the strategic directions of other stakeholders and site-specific references. A complete list can be found in the References section. A summary of the relevant aspects of each of the background documents to Tower Hill's future directions is provided in Appendix A.

A synopsis of this information is provided below (Section 2.3). However, prior to this, some basic information about Tower Hill is presented.

2.2 Tower Hill - Some Basic Information

2.2.1 An Historical Timeline

Date	Event
30,000 BC (est.)	Volcanic eruption/ formation. This was eventually followed by natural revegetation.
Until approx. 1840	Used by the Koroitgundidj people and their descendants.
1802	First confirmed European sighting (Captain Baudin aboard the Geographe).
1840	First occupation by pioneer graziers (clearing commences).
1855	Eugene Von Guerard painted 'Outlook' (See Figure 2.1).

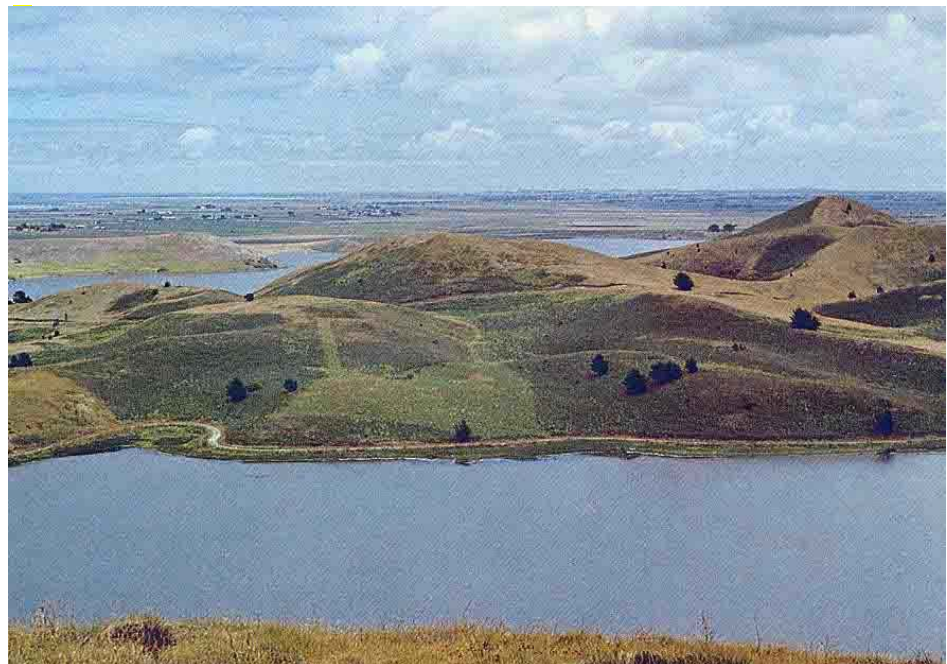
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Date	Event
1892	Declared Victoria's first 'national park' by local Council (but not managed as such).
Mid 1950s	Grazing, quarrying, crop growing and rubbish dumping continue until the hills and island are bare and little wildlife remains (See Figure 2.2). Duck shooting was also allowed. Extensive lobbying for revegetation including efforts by the Warrnambool Field & Game Club and the Warrnambool Field Naturalists Club.
1961 - Present	Declared State Game Reserve under Wildlife Act. Fisheries and Wildlife Division responsible for management. Replanting program commences. Over 300,000 trees planted with the help of conservation and community groups and schools (See Figure 3.3). Tower Hill becomes recreation and conservation asset for the local community and for visitors. Site is significant for interpretation and education.
1969/70	Robin Boyd-designed visitor centre constructed. Series of interpretive displays subsequently installed.
1997	Parks Victoria became responsible for management. Managed under Wildlife Act.
2002	Commissioning of the Tower Hill Future Directions Strategy.

Figure 2.1: Eugene Von Guerard's Outlook (1855)



Figure 2.2: Tower Hill (Circa 1955)



Source: Fisheries and Wildlife Division, Ministry for Conservation (Undated)

Figure 2.3: Tower Hill (Circa 1995)



Source: Fisheries and Wildlife Division, Ministry for Conservation (Undated)

2.2.2 Location

Tower Hill is located almost equidistant between Port Fairy and Warrnambool, close to the township of Koroit. The Princes Highway provides immediate access to Tower Hill, running directly south of its southern rim.

2.2.3 Major Features

Tower Hill is a complex volcanic formation comprising a main crater with a surrounding tuff ring. The inner walls of the tuff ring are steep and enclose a flat-floored crater over 90m deep.

Within the crater, Tower Hill is divided into the three scoria islands, and a permanent and semi-permanent lake. Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of their component land areas.

Table 2.1: *Tower Hill Land Breakdown*

Islands	Main Island	125 ha
	Fairy Island	18 ha
	Hat Island	1 ha
Bank		120 ha
Water	Permanent	80 ha
	Semi-permanent	270 ha
Total		Approx. 610

Source: Fisheries and Wildlife Division, Ministry for Conservation (Undated)

2.2.4 Facilities

Tower Hill has a variety of facilities. See Appendix D: Park Notes Sheet for Tower Hill.

The Natural History Centre (i.e. visitor centre) designed by the late Robin Boyd has interpretive displays and publications. A bird hide enables visitors to have a close encounter with wildlife during periods of high water. Barbecues, picnic tables, toilets and car parking facilities are provided.

There are also five self-guided walks at Tower Hill, each with a different theme.

- Peak Climb (orientation and geology).
- Lava Tongue Boardwalk (wetlands and wildlife).
- Hat Island Habitat Track (revegetation).
- Whurrong Walk (wetlands and habitat).
- Journey to the Last Volcano (geology and wildlife).

2.3 Implications from Background Documents

The background information, summarised in Appendix A, can be divided into two broad categories: documents that impact on the direction for Tower Hill within a broader planning context, and site-specific references.

2.3.1 Strategic Framework

At the broadest level, the State Government attempts to balance *economic, social and environment* outcomes when governing Victoria and supports the management of a parks and reserves system through government agencies.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) has the role of ensuring the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources for both current and future generations. Parks Victoria is responsible for the planning and management of Victoria's parks and reserves system including Tower Hill.

Both agencies:

- Understand the significance of cultural and natural assets to Victorians;
- Wish to develop partnerships with other public and private sector stakeholders when managing these assets;
- Acknowledge the need to improve community engagement/capacity in the management process;
- Commit to ensuring that regional Victoria benefits from its fair share of infrastructure spending; and
- Realise that tourism can provide a vehicle for maintaining the natural and cultural assets, while meeting the needs of Victorian residents.

Given these principles, the funding of improvements to Tower Hill is in line with State Government directions. However, Tower Hill must compete with other public expenditure priorities.

Tower Hill is managed by Parks Victoria under the Wildlife Act. It is one of about 2800 reserves in Victoria managed for conservation, heritage and recreation (Canopy, 2002).

From a state-wide tourism viewpoint, Tower Hill is generally regarded as a secondary attraction in the overall Great Ocean Road product, particularly Port Campbell National Park. However, Tower Hill is a very important regional attraction and its appeal may be enhanced by:

- Tourism Victoria's desire to improve the quality and returns from existing products, not the development of new attractions;
- Efforts to encourage Great Ocean Road visitors to explore attractions off the Road;
- Heritage and cultural tourism synergies with other regional attractions; and

Both Moyne and Warrnambool Councils recognise the importance of Tower Hill to local residents. The benefits perceived include tourism spin-offs and recreational, conservation and amenity benefits. However, local government, while supporting Tower Hill improvements, must weigh their support with their goals of financial responsibility and maximising the leverage of external resources.

2.3.2 Site Specific Priorities and Issues

Parks Victoria currently manages over 3.5 million hectares of parks and reserves including Port Campbell and Mount Eccles National Parks in the south-west region. These parks have a high priority for resource allocations. Port Campbell National Park attracts about 1.9 million visitors per year and both parks have very high natural and landscape values.

Tower Hill currently attracts about 170,000 visitors per year. It has high landscape values but does not have high natural values compared with Victoria's national and State parks (Parks Victoria, 2000). Parks Victoria must allocate most of its resources – both human and financial – to parks and reserves with the highest need. This means putting the greatest management effort into sites with very significant natural and cultural values and areas under threat from visitor impacts.²

² A number of public submissions suggested that the 'social value' supported by Tower Hill should be better reflected in Parks Victoria's funds allocation process. One of Tower Hill's greatest strengths is that it is highly valued by the local community, largely because of their integral involvement in the

Unfortunately this means that unless Parks Victoria is successful in securing additional funding allocations from the State Government, it is unlikely that Tower Hill will benefit from recurrent funding increases.

Other site-specific references indicate that:

- Tower Hill's name could be changed. Some people believe that "State Game Reserve" is inappropriate.
- Directional signage should be improved, both within the Reserve and at its road entry and exit points.
- There are opportunities to improve interpretive signage and to develop guided tours and additional events.
- Moyne Shire is taking action to ensure that development is controlled around the crater rim and within line of sight views from the crater.
- Some local residents have expressed concern over the level of maintenance, particularly weed control, and koala numbers.

Several tourism strategies and recent local press articles suggest that the feasibility of establishing food and beverage facilities, merchandising facilities, specialised education services and entry fees be investigated. KPMG Management Consulting investigated the financial feasibility of these opportunities in 1996 and found that only the imposition of entry fees would be financially worthwhile. All other options would probably deliver marginal returns and would be unlikely to contribute additional funds for reserve improvements and maintenance.

Finally, the most recent survey of visitors to Tower Hill (100 interviews conducted by independent consultants in 2001) indicates that:

- Word of mouth underpins visitor numbers to Tower Hill, as does the reserve's convenience – to local townships and highway links.
- The aesthetic quality of the reserve is obviously one of the core values that support this publicity.
- The vast majority of visitors to Tower Hill are satisfied with the visit and with park management.
- Those visitors that are not fully satisfied suggest that improved signage and information provision would help.

Reserve's revegetation, one of the most important early conservation projects in a Victorian park or reserve.

- The perceived 'availability' and 'quality' of entry roads, pre-visit information and directional/ orientation signs at Tower Hill is below that recorded by comparable Victorian parks.

3 COMMUNITY CONCERNS & ASPIRATIONS

3.1 Public Forum

A community forum held at Tower Hill on Sunday March 17 attracted about 90 participants and provided a diverse range of comments and suggestions regarding future management of the Reserve.

Figure 3.1: Participants at the forum



Small workshop groups considered a range of discussion topics. All comments were recorded and typed for community reference and review.

In summary, the main issues and opportunities identified included:

- Tower Hill is popular with many local residents but they would like to see opportunities investigated for improved tracks, signs, barbecues, information and other facilities.
- There are perceptions by some people of inadequate management and maintenance resulting from reallocated Parks Victoria staff and resources.

- The visitor centre is attractive but some would like to see displays updated, the counter staffed more frequently and refreshments sold, possibly using sponsored funding and volunteers.
- There are opportunities to increase the number of school groups visiting and improve educational services.
- There is concern over weeds, particularly their aesthetic impact. Deakin University and South West Institute of TAFE could be more involved in the future.
- There are many opportunities for guided activities, special events, art, music and festivals.
- Interaction with wildlife is a strength but emus can be aggressive and koala numbers need to be monitored.
- Geology is also a strength: Tower Hill is a very important site.
- Consider camping, and use of former ranger house for education.
- Consider fees and charges for tours and events.
- Utilise employment schemes and apply for grants.
- Many opportunities to package Tower Hill with other attractions, e.g. in Koroit, and market better.
- Need to rename – not seen as a game reserve now. Consider changing status, e.g. to regional park.
- Perceptions regarding water quality vary.
- Feeling that Friends of Tower Hill group have not been adequately involved in the past.
- Has been lack of community consultation and information on works programs in the past.
- Opportunity for advisory group to oversee management. This may include Deakin University, TAFE, Friends Group, Indigenous Communities, Councils, tourism bodies and others.

3.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with over 20 individuals and representatives of community groups, tourism, conservation and education bodies, Parks Victoria and other government agencies. A discussion was also held with members of the Friends of Tower Hill. A complete list of interviewees is attached as Appendix B.

Comments were recorded and reviewed. These included:

- Key values are geology, scenery, contact with wildlife, visitor centre and opportunities for walking and picnics.
- Social/cultural values are important too – Aboriginal use, changing attitudes to the land, major re-vegetation project starting in 1960s etc. It was considered important to interpret these.
- Reserve provides very important open space for residents of Koroit, Warrnambool and Port Fairy.
- Opportunities to improve signs, information, interpretation, education, branding and vegetation management.
- Opportunities to increase the involvement of the Aboriginal community in the interpretation and management of the Reserve.
- Natural History Centre an asset but could upgrade and update displays, provide refreshments, guided walks etc. Also could interpret contribution of Robin Boyd – one of Australia's most influential architects and social commentators in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Need agreed conservation objectives to guide future land management. Reserve does not have high flora values due to past land use.
- Unlikely to raise much revenue or be self-funding, but opportunities for events and festivals, e.g. Tower Hill Biennial.
- Opportunities for community input into management decisions, e.g. through an advisory group.
- Opportunity for use as outdoor campus for South West Institute of TAFE and Deakin University.
- Opportunity to rename area and consider putting under National Parks Act (although not as a national park because NRE staff advise that it does not meet conservation criteria).
- Future private development near crater is a potential threat to landscape values.

The main outcomes of the consultation process are discussed further in subsequent sections.

4 SWOT ANALYSIS, KEY ISSUES & STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

A 'SWOT' analysis is a useful tool frequently used in strategic planning. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats are listed and then the key issues are identified for detailed investigation and resolution. The following list was compiled for Tower Hill from comments at the community forum, stakeholder interviews and on-site observations.

4.1 Strengths

- Highly significant volcanic features, assessable to visitors.
- Opportunities to see wildlife at close hand
- On major highway, close to tourist towns.
- Pleasant recreation opportunities for local community and visitors, including walking, picnicking and sight seeing.
- Attractive visitor centre and displays.
- Unique history including early settlement degradation, first 'national park', and conservation work with a high level of community involvement.
- The best example in Victoria of a large-scale vegetated landscape re-created from an early painting.
- On Register of National Estate; likely candidate for Victoria's Heritage Register.
- Features an important Robin Boyd building, recommended for Victorian Heritage Register.
- Strong Friends of Tower Hill Group and community interest in Reserve.
- Strong links with indigenous community - contemporary and traditional. A stronger contemporary relationship desired.
- Demonstrated willingness of public sector agencies to co-operate and to continue community engagement.

4.2 Weaknesses

- Finite resources available for weed control and revegetation of understorey.
- Perception by local community of reduced level of land management.
- Perception by local community of decline in quality of facilities, e.g. signs, picnic facilities, barbecues and tracks.
- Weak road entry and directional signage.
- Competition for resources from sites with higher visitation, e.g. Port Campbell National Park, or higher natural values, e.g. Mount Eccles National Park
- Declining community engagement in recent years.

4.3 Opportunities

- Improved entry, signs, facilities, picnic area, visitor centre.
- Improved standards of maintenance.
- Improved land management, particularly vegetation management.
- Improved wildlife management.
- Staff Natural History Centre, possibly with volunteers (and in association with the proposed Koroit Visitor Information Centre).
- Improved servicing of education groups visiting site.
- Improved and coordinated promotion.
- Improved partnerships with key groups and organisations, e.g. Friends, local Aboriginal community, Deakin University, South West Institute of TAFE, neighbours, and employment schemes.
- Partnership Keith Turnball Research Institute and Arthur Rylah Research Institute for biological control of pests both flora and fauna
- Economic benefit – increased visitors and length of stay in Reserve will benefit local tourism.
- Raise revenue, e.g. small fee, sell refreshments and souvenirs.

- Events, festivals and activities, e.g. jazz, arts.
- Indigenous relationships and partnerships and possible employment programs.
- Rename, e.g. wildlife park, regional park or volcanic reserve. No community agreement so this would require an extensive consultative process
- New use for former ranger's house, e.g. education, volunteers, work groups.
- Provide for camping, but high service costs.
- Support from VNPA to place the reserve under the National Parks Act in Schedule 4 – 'other parks'

4.4 Threats

- Finite staff, technical and financial resources.
- Aesthetic impact of weeds.
- Poor past community consultation - Friends Group feels they have not been adequately involved
- Emus aggressive in picnic area.
- Koalas damaging Eucalypts. Potential also for Kangaroo and emu overpopulation.
- Pest animals – foxes and rabbits.
- Community concern over number of birds.
- Low water levels in lake – area less attractive to visitors.
- Perceived decline in water quality.
- Housing development near crater rim.
- Threat to dynoflagellate

4.5 Key Issues

The key issues facing Tower Hill identified through background materials, consultation and the SWOT analysis are outlined below.³ These are addressed in section 5, through their incorporation into development opportunities.

4.5.1 Visitor & Education Services

Improvements to visitor and education facilities and services at Tower Hill are limited by competing demands in Parks Victoria for financial resources. Parks Victoria funding for major works has been determined across the State for the next three years and any substantial further work at Tower Hill would require funding from grants, sponsorship or other external sources. More ranger/s time on site is also constrained by Parks Victoria's existing budget allocations.

4.5.2 Land Management & Site Protection

Current land management (weed and pest control, re-vegetation and wildlife management) suffers from lack of agreed objectives and is regarded as unsatisfactory by some members of the local community, Friends Group and other stakeholders. Protection of the Reserve will be enhanced through the development of an Environmental Management Plan.

4.5.3 Use of Visitor Centre

The Natural History Centre has potential to attract more visits and provide a stronger focal point for interpretation, education, sales and possibly refreshments and tours.

³ Public submissions suggest that some other key issues include the lack of a clear conservation objective for Tower Hill and the limited involvement of the Aboriginal community.

4.5.4 Image, Activities & Marketing

There is a perception that the image of the Reserve has declined locally and new initiatives are needed to improve its profile, e.g. new name, improved road signs and entry, activity programs, events and festivals and cooperative marketing.

4.5.5 Management Partnerships

Several potential management partnerships have been identified, involving continued management by Parks Victoria with the cooperation of local councils, groups and organisations. The establishment of an Advisory Group to contribute to decision-making could assist this arrangement.

4.6 Strategic Directions

In order to address these key issues, strategic directions for the future of Tower Hill need to be identified so that management and development efforts are coordinated. Only coordinated effort will deliver outcomes that responsibly meet community expectations.

The following strategic directions have been developed so that progress on each of the key issues can be gauged.

4.6.1 Visitor & Education Services

. The Reserve will be managed to ensure that visitors have a high quality experience. The Reserve's key values will be supported by well-maintained facilities, and quality web based education material and on site interpretation.

4.6.2 Land Management & Site Protection

Tower Hill's key values will be protected. Clear land management and site protection priorities will be established to guide future

activities at Tower Hill. These priorities will appropriately address weed and pest control, re-vegetation and wildlife management.

4.6.3 Use of Visitor Centre

The visitor centre (Natural History Centre) has the potential to significantly enhance the visitor experience. Parks Victoria will work to ensure that quality interpretation services are provided in the Centre. Where possible, Parks Victoria will support activities that increase the staffing of the Centre (through partner agencies and volunteers) and the quality of interpretative material on offer within the Centre.

4.6.4 Image, Activities & Marketing

Tower Hill needs a focal point that helps the visitor to enjoy the Reserve's values and facilities. The logical place for the Reserve's focus is the Natural History Centre and the central carpark and picnicking areas. Parks Victoria will endeavour to reinforce and improve this area.

Parks Victoria will also work to improve the accessibility of Tower Hill. Marketing campaigns and promotional activities will also be supported where they reinforce the Reserve's key values. Parks Victoria will cooperate with regional stakeholders towards these ends where it is mutually beneficial.

4.6.5 Management Partnerships

Parks Victoria acknowledges the need to engage the community in the ongoing management of Tower Hill. Parks Victoria will work to formalise the engagement process and will act as a coordinating body to ensure that the efforts of community stakeholders are appropriately guided and supported.

5 POSSIBLE PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

A series of possible projects and programs was developed in response to the SWOT analysis, key issues and statements of strategic direction developed in the previous section.

The tables overleaf outline these projects and programs, and identify the advantages, constraints, partnership opportunities and resource requirements of each. Also shown in the tables are the priorities – High (H), Medium (M), Low (L) - placed on each of the projects and programs by Parks Victoria, Moyne Shire Council and Warrnambool City Council.

The projects and programs have been grouped under ‘key issue’ headings. This has been done so that the contribution of each project to Tower Hill is clearly stated. Notwithstanding this, some projects and programs address a number of the key issues simultaneously.

5.1.1 Visitor & Education Services

The Reserve will be managed to ensure that visitors have a high quality experience. The Reserve's key values will be supported by well-maintained facilities, and quality education materials and interpretation.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
1. Investigate possibility of TAFE student competition to prepare landscape master plan for main visitor area and entrance. Progressively implement improvements. Include improved circulation, signs, barriers, furniture, information etc and removal of stumps.	M-H	- Updated design of key sites to meet future visitor demand. - Improved pedestrian and vehicle circulation and quality of settings and facilities. - Improved visitor experience.	Significant cost. Funding not available in current 3-year Parks Victoria capital works program.	- Councils. - TAFE - Deakin - Employment programs.	> \$50,000 capital cost. Implementation dependent on, and only possible through, a successful RIDF grant.
2. Upgrade three rim lookouts: improve lookout points and amenity, provide roadside 'lookout' signs, replace von Guerard interpretive sign.	H	- Improved image and experience for passing motorists. - Additional visitors attracted into reserve.	Cost	Moyne Council	\$10,000 - \$20,000. - Dependent on obtaining funding.
3. Review and revise walking track network to provide more short walks and improved accessibility, signs and amenity.	M	Cater for wider range of visitors, increase length of stay and increase satisfaction.	Modest resources required for track materials and signs.	TAFE, Friends, and other volunteers	\$10-20,000 through 2002/03 Grants program
4. Improve opportunities for wildlife viewing and interpret animal behaviour and wildlife management issues.	L	Improved visitor experience and appreciation.	Could affect koala management program.	Friends, Deakin, TAFE	- Project dependent. \$5,000 for materials.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
5. Re-develop educational materials (on Internet) and provide some on-site support for educating visits.	H	• Increase in educational use and understanding of values.	• Significant resource requirements. • Volunteer guides a possibility. PV staff availability limited.	• Deakin, TAFE, possibly Friends and retired teachers etc.	• Partnership dependent. • Make materials available on Internet.
6. Explore opportunity for on-site extension education officer to run programs for schools.	M	• Increase in educational use and understanding of values.	• Significant resource requirement. • Only 4 teachers in PV's parks system.	• Ed. Dept, TAFE	• Partnership dependent. • May be Education Dept or NHT funding for teacher for interpretation and education programs in school holidays
7. Introduce visitor fees to help fund services and facilities.	L	• Possibility of increased funds to implement strategy.	• Cost and difficulty of collecting fees. • Unpopular with locals and tourists. • Reduced number of visitors likely. • Need to enhance reserve facilities and services to meet higher expectations.	• Possible private sector partnership (e.g. BOOT).	• \$80,000 - \$100,000 capital costs. • Net income <u>up to</u> \$200,000 p.a.

5.1.2 Land Management & Site Protection

Tower Hill's key values will be protected. Clear land management and site protection priorities will be established to guide future activities at Tower Hill. These priorities will appropriately address weed and pest control, re-vegetation and wildlife management.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
8. Improve vegetation management: undertake seasonal weed control at priority sites in main visitor areas and along road. Follow up with selected planting and mulching.	H	- Improved visual amenity. - Part of overall vegetation management strategy.	Need skilled application of herbicides at appropriate time.	- Friends - Local education groups/students.	\$5,000-10,000 (est.)
9. Develop and progressively implement an up to date Environmental Management Plan to consolidate land management. Relate to current NRE principles and priorities regarding native vegetation management. Focus on main visitor areas and priority conservation sites.	H	- Clarification of long-term aims of re-vegetation work and focus on key tasks and priorities. - Sustainable management of pest plants and animals and wildlife. - Background data for applications for grants and employment/training schemes.	- May not be supported by all volunteers. - Vision of completely reinstated flora not seen as achievable.	- Friends, TAFE, Deakin, other volunteers - training schemes. - Deakin already a research partner with Parks Victoria.	- Partnership dependent. - Grant possibilities, eg Good Neighbour program. - Training scheme possibilities.
10. Monitor wildlife populations, water quality and water levels	L	Improved basis for management decisions.	Nil	Friends, TAFE, Deakin, other volunteers	Partnership dependent.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
11. Place under National Parks Act (in schedule 4 - 'other parks') or Crown Land (Reserves) Act.	L	- Improved recognition of values and increased protection. - Higher status.	- May restrict revenue raising. - May be opposed by some shooters. - Too degraded to be a 'national park'.	Nil	Admin./staff costs - PV and NRE.
12. Establish partnership with ARI/KTRI for pest plant biological experiments	M	Part of overall Environmental Management Plan	Nil	ARI/KTRI	Parks Victoria staff time to develop, implement and manage
13. Ensure strong planning scheme protection for landscape and aesthetic values.	L-M	Values and visitor experience protected	Nil	Moyne Council	Advisory role only.

5.1.3 Use of Visitor Centre

The visitor centre (Natural History Centre) has the potential to significantly enhance the visitor experience. Parks Victoria will work to ensure that quality interpretation services are provided in the Centre. Where possible, Parks Victoria will support activities that increase the staffing of the Centre and the quality of interpretative material on offer within the Centre.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
14. Include improved visibility and walking access to centre in master plan for visitor area (see 1 above).	H	• Sense of welcome for visitors. • Increased use of visitor centre.			• Minor cost
15. Explore opportunities to upgrade entry, sales area, displays and lighting, providing up to date interpretation with more interactive exhibits. Include interpretation of Robin Boyd's important contribution.	L	• Enhanced appreciation of values of site and important early conservation achievements. • Increased appreciation of Boyd's work.	• Significant resources required for any large-scale upgrade. • Updating desirable every few years.	• Friends, other volunteers, TAFE. • Tourism Victoria	• Partnership dependent. • Tourism grant.
16. Provide brief audio-visual interpreting key values of site.	L	• Better overall understanding of importance of Tower Hill and orientation to site.	• Resources required. • Updating desirable every few years.	• Warrnambool Multimedia, Deakin, TAFE, or other local organisations	• Partnership dependent. • Up to \$30,000 if contracted out.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
17. Investigate staffing options through Deakin, TAFE, volunteers or commercial operator (lease) – particularly on busy days. Provide for sales of expanded range of publications and souvenirs and basic refreshments.	H	- Personalised information service for visitors and opportunity to purchase relevant items. - Possibility of staffing under Aboriginal employment scheme. - On-sell to food and accommodation providers.	- Limited resources for staffing by ranger. - Organisational and training requirements for volunteers. - Doubtful viability for commercial operator. - Visitation variable. - Food handling constraints.	- Friends, local groups or volunteers. - Commercial operator. - Aboriginal community.	- Volunteer or other resources. - Or, lease contract, which would yield at best \$50,000 p.a. and at worst small losses. Assumes private sector interest.

5.1.4 Image, Activities & Marketing

Tower Hill needs a focal point that helps the visitor to enjoy the Reserve's values and facilities. The logical place for the Reserve's focus is the Natural History Centre and the central carpark and picnicking areas. Parks Victoria will endeavour to reinforce and improve the existing focal point with the Reserve.

Parks Victoria will also work to improve the accessibility of Tower Hill. Marketing campaigns and promotional activities will also be supported where they reinforce the Reserve's key values. Parks Victoria will cooperate with regional stakeholders towards these ends where it is mutually beneficial.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
18. Investigate name change, e.g. to Tower Hill Volcanic Reserve or Tower Hill Heritage Park.	M	• More appropriate name; better for marketing. • Supported by range of stakeholders.	• Some stakeholders may not support.	• Nil	• Admin. costs and signs.
19. Upgrade entry with logo and signs	L	• Improved image, more visitors attracted.	• May not conform with Parks Victoria standards.	• Councils	• \$10,000 - \$20,000.
20. Review/revise Tower Hill signs on Highway (remove 'Tower Hill' sign on Koroit road?)	L-M	• Visitation increased.	• Cost	• Councils, VicRoads	• Minimal

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
21. Develop events and festivals program including Tower Hill festival, links to other local festivals. Include music, dance, storytelling, food, and activities. Invite Aboriginal involvement.	M	• Quality cultural experiences for Moyne/Warrnambool residents. • Increased visitation and community involvement and support. • Promotional/sponsorship opportunity. • Revenue raising opportunity.	• Large organising role • Limited parking available	• Moyne Council, Arts bodies, Koroit community etc.	• Partnership dependent.
22. Develop modest sound and light show in visitor centre environs. Run on busy days.	L	• Diversification of attraction. • Promotional opportunity. • Revenue raising opportunity. • Link to Koroit theme pub dinner.	• Cost	• Deakin, TAFE, Councils, local volunteers.	• Dependent on volunteer or external resources..
23. Integrate marketing of Tower Hill into regional and local programs. Promote as 2 to 4 hour site.	M-H	• Increased visitation with benefits to local tourism businesses.	• Nil	• Tourism bodies, individual tourism operators, e.g. accommodation places.	• Project dependent.

5.1.5 Management Partnerships

Parks Victoria acknowledges the need to engage the community in the ongoing management of Tower Hill. Parks Victoria will work to formalise the engagement process and will act as a coordinating body to ensure that the efforts of community stakeholders are appropriately guided and supported.

Project/program Description	Priority *	Advantages	Constraints	Partnership opportunities	Resource requirements **
24. Form Advisory Group to provide partnership input, advise on works program and support consultation and promotion.	H	- Increased community involvement and commitment. - Range of needs considered. - Improved relations with PV.	Additional organisational task.	Councils, Friends, Deakin, TAFE, Aboriginal groups, Tourism organisations.	Admin./staff costs.
25. Provide ongoing support for Friends group.	H	- Improved relations and coordinated activities. - Clarification of reserve programs. - Potential for increased membership (with PV promotion). - Increased chance of receiving grants.	Nil	Friends	Admin./staff costs.
26. Establish 'Outdoor Campus' for Deakin and TAFE. Deakin students research role and TAFE student's workplace training.	H	- Support for land management and possibly visitor services. - Focal point for young people in region.	Projects need to conform with PV conservation objectives.	Deakin, TAFE, Councils.	Partnership dependent.

* H: High priority, M: Medium priority, L: Low priority

** 'Admin./ staff costs' incurs an opportunity cost, ie the cost of Parks Victoria not undertaking alternative activities.

6 PREFERRED PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

The projects and programs that enjoyed support from both the Strategy funding stakeholders and the wider community were the formation of an Advisory Group (No. 23) and the Outdoor Campus (No. 25) concept. Two other initiatives that were not presented in the Draft Strategy also emerged as high priority initiatives. These included the development and communication of an Environmental Management Plan for Tower Hill, and the Bush Foods Trail/s concept.

Each of these projects is consistent with the strategic directions developed for Tower Hill and address a number of the Reserve's key issues simultaneously. More detailed explanation is provided below.

6.1 Formation & Support of Advisory Group

Undoubtedly Tower Hill is highly valued by the local community. The lobbying of community groups was the precursor of the Reserve's extensive revegetation program and this was predominantly carried out by volunteers. Community organisations such as the Friends of Tower Hill continue to contribute significantly to the Reserve.

Other entities such as the Moyne Shire and Warrnambool City Councils, Deakin University, South West Institute of TaFE, Tourism organisations, Aboriginal Cooperatives, etc. share some common goals with Parks Victoria. In addition, they often have access to resources that could be invested at Tower Hill for mutual benefit.

Parks Victoria should formalise the interaction of such groups to ensure that community expectations are identified and met, and so that cooperative projects can be developed for Tower Hill's benefit. Moreover, an Advisory Group could play a crucial role in helping Parks Victoria address problems and opportunities that arise in future.

As a start the Advisory Group could exist to *"Coordinate and channel ideas, effort and resources towards initiatives that protect Tower Hill's key values and/or enhance the visitor experience"*.

Parks Victoria will need to lead, organise and attend Advisory Group meetings. Furthermore, Parks Victoria should be responsible for initiating follow up actions that build Group actions in line with its charter.

Membership of the Advisory Group should be arranged so that its activities are productive. Eligibility criteria for membership should be established as a guide for selection. The Group's chairperson could be a Parks Victoria staff member. Alternatively, the chairperson could be via nomination or the position may revolve periodically.

The Advisory Group in Summary

Objective

Improve engagement, coordinate effort and leverage resources for the mutual benefit of Tower Hill and participating stakeholders.

Advantages

Improved community relations and improved stakeholder coordination, project development and resource raising capacities.

Disadvantages

Administration costs.

Partnership Opportunities

Friends Group, Councils, education institutions and Aboriginal cooperatives have expressed interest. Tourism associations are likely to participate, as are other community organisations and individuals.

Resource Requirements

Parks Victoria staff time for coordination and attendance of meetings, and for follow up actions. Probably 5 days effort required for each Group meeting. Establishment costs would be minimal.

Commercial Viability

Not applicable. However, an Advisory Group could contribute significantly to various development projects.

Risks

Stakeholders' inability to agree on Tower Hill's priorities.

Indicative Action Plan

- Finalise charter for Advisory Group.
- Establish eligibility criteria for membership.
- Invite selected members.
- Advertise for community representation.
- Select community representatives.
- Convene first meeting.

6.2 Agreeing Common Objectives

The community consultation process incorporated in this Strategy's development highlighted that members of the community have

varying thoughts about what needs to happen at Tower Hill. While some locals are concerned about weed control and walking track maintenance, others focus on wildlife management, the protection of birds, tourism attraction and other issues.

Although it is important that an integrated approach be taken with Tower Hill's management, there needs to be broad agreement about which issues are priorities. There is also a need to communicate these priorities to the community so that public debate is useful and constructive.

Furthermore, stakeholders, who may be members of the proposed Advisory Group, need to know which areas of the Reserve are earmarked for particular activities. For instance, stakeholders planning the Reserve's visitor focal point need to know what their options include. Are they limited to the existing Natural History Centre and surrounds or should other areas be considered?

An Environmental Management Plan (EMP), including a site plan, needs to be developed for this purpose. The EMP should identify areas of the Reserve with key values, areas under threat, and areas in urgent need of maintenance/ revegetation etc. The identification of zones in accordance with Parks Victoria's park management zoning is desirable.

Such a document would be valuable for regional stakeholders and local community members. Moreover, the process of developing such a document would also prove to be both informative and educational for those interested in Tower Hill's future.

Agreeing Common Objectives in Summary

Objective

Agree on objectives for conserving, protecting and developing Tower Hill so that future on-site activities are appropriately guided. Reflect these agreed objectives in an Environmental Management Plan of the Reserve that would guide future project planning.

Advantages

Improved community and stakeholder relations, and improved management, resource and project prioritisation. These benefits would underpin better protection, restoration, development and interpretation of the Reserve's key values.

Disadvantages

Development costs and updating costs every 10 years.

Partnership Opportunities

Advisory group, Friends Group, Councils, education institutions, Aboriginal cooperatives and tourism associations could provide inputs, as could DNRE staff and other specialists.

Resource Requirements

Plan development would draw on the efforts of various stakeholders, which are likely to be volunteered. However, leadership, coordination and documentation efforts would be required from Parks Victoria. The budget for such efforts would be about \$10,000. Staff labour time would be in the vicinity of 60 – 90 days and would need to be redirected from current projects by negotiation with stakeholders in other parks eg. Friends of Port Campbell NP, Friends of Bay Of Islands CP, and the Port Campbell NP Advisory Group.

Commercial Viability

Not applicable. However, the development of common objectives will remove a large amount of uncertainty in the planning of future projects.

Risks

- Stakeholders' inability to agree on Tower Hill's values/ priorities and subsequent confusion in developing the master plan .
- Requires an ongoing monitoring program to ensure assumptions underpinning the Plan do not change.

Indicative Action Plan

- Identify stakeholders/ experts that need to be involved.
- Contact stakeholders to input to draft EMP
- Facilitate workshop to document Plan.
- Produce Plan.
- Disseminate Plan widely throughout the community (Advisory Group will help with this task).

6.3 Outdoor Campus

The Outdoor Campus would have three primary stakeholders – South West Institute of TaFE, Deakin University and Parks Victoria. In essence, students from South West TaFE and Deakin requiring work placements, training and projects to develop their skills would be provided with opportunities at Tower Hill. Parks Victoria would have to coordinate and supervise the process.

6.3.1 South West Institute of TaFE

The Outdoor Campus concept would be based on the Reserve being a focus site of fieldwork for a number of the Institute's student groups.

Potential activities could include:

- 'Natural Resource Management' students undertaking flora & fauna audits, weed assessment & control, revegetation works, habitat planning, water level & quality testing, etc.
- 'Tourism' students and 'Marketing' students being involved with visitor surveys, displays, market research, etc.
- Ad hoc involvement of 'Carpentry' students, 'Horticulture' students, 'Multimedia' students, etc. as projects arise.

South West Institute of TaFE suggests that approximately 80 students including first, second and part time students, primarily from Natural Resource Management, could be on-site at Tower Hill for 2 days a week during the academic year. Such a labour force could contribute enormously to various projects if managed efficiently.

Parks Victoria would need to provide certain resources and facilities to ensure TaFE students are appropriately catered for. This would include a facility from which work could be based including a classroom, resource centre, workshop & storage area. Current facilities could satisfy some or all of these needs but would probably need refurbishment (e.g. former Ranger's house).

The Institute's involvement would not provide regular staffing for the Natural History Centre or any formal presence over the busy summer holiday period. Having said this, student involvement with the site may increase the likelihood of volunteer staff over such periods.

6.3.2 Deakin University

Tower Hill provides a close and accessible field study site for Deakin to teach such things as environmental planning, flora and fauna surveys, exotic species and pest management and recreation planning.

Deakin at Warrnambool currently offers four degrees that are relevant to their proposed use of Tower Hill. These are:

- Bachelor of Environmental Science (Integrated Catchment Management);
- Bachelor of Environmental Science (Marine & Freshwater Science);
- Bachelor of Environmental Science (Fisheries Management & Aquaculture); and
- Bachelor of Arts (Eco-communication).

All four degrees include a compulsory work placement. Approximately 80 students are enrolled each year as 3rd year students, seeking work placement opportunities. Deakin expects that a popular placement would involve students manning the Natural History Centre and physically contributing to land management activities at Tower Hill. It is likely that between 6 and 12 students will volunteer for 40 hours of work placement at Tower Hill each semester (inc. the 'summer' semester).

To accommodate this, Parks Victoria would need to provide a supervisor who would train students in the essentials of visitor management and nature interpretation. This would be relatively rudimentary training, as students would already have a sound knowledge of natural resource management. However, supervision would need to be taken seriously - supervisors would be required to assess the students' performance and to comment on their approach to work, their strengths and weaknesses etc.

Student work placement would require minimal capital costs. A useful addition to the Natural History Centre might be a corner in which student work is demonstrated (e.g. project work, research results) - this might call for some refurbishment. The major cost is in staff supervision time, but again, once students have their initial training they should be able to operate relatively autonomously.

<i>Outdoor Campus in Summary</i> How will it work?			
Project Partner	Partner Contribution	Partner Needs	Expected Outcomes
South West Institute of TaFE	- Extensive student resources for land management and other activities. - Development planning for projects for students to work on. - Ongoing commitment to provide quality services at Tower Hill.	- Classroom, resource centre, workshop and storage facilities. - Development planning for projects for students to work on. - Access to Tower Hill inc. specific project areas. - Ongoing commitment by Parks Victoria.	- Increased and more coordinated land management activities. - Human resources for ad hoc projects that arise. - Improved 'presence' on site throughout most of the year.
Deakin University	- Student resources for information, interpretation and land management activities. - Development planning for projects for students to work on. - Ongoing commitment to provide quality services at Tower Hill.	- Development planning for projects for students to work on. - Access to Tower Hill and to the Natural History Centre. - Student training, supervision and assessment by Parks Victoria staff. - Ongoing commitment by Parks Victoria.	- Increased and more coordinated manning of Natural History Centre. - Improved 'presence' on site.
Parks Victoria	- Access to Tower Hill, the Natural History Centre and project areas within the Reserve. - Classroom, resource centre, workshop and storage facilities. - Development planning for projects for students to work on. - Student training, supervision and assessment by Parks Victoria staff.	Commitment to quality service provision by SW TaFE and Deakin.	- Improved Project prioritisation. - Improved ability to coordinate volunteer resources at Tower Hill.

Outdoor Campus in Summary (Continued)

Objective

To provide student resources for visitor services, interpretation, land management and other activities at Tower Hill by providing an avenue for TaFE and University student work projects/ placements.

Advantages

- Access to increased human resources for information provision, interpretation and land management activities.
- Increased 'presence' on site to enhance the visitor experience.
- Forced 'land management' project prioritisation.
- Improved ability to plan for contributions of volunteers.

These advantages will combine to underpin better protection, restoration, development and interpretation of Reserve's key values.

Disadvantages

- Capital resources required to establish (e.g. necessary refurbishments).
- Substantial project planning required up front and on an ongoing basis.
- Ongoing requirement of Parks Victoria staff time for training, supervising and assessment activities.

Partnership Opportunities

South West Institute of TaFE and Deakin University are already committed 'in principle' to the project.

Resource Requirements

- Refurbishment costs have not been quantified but are likely to be substantial.
- Thorough project prioritisation and planning will be required over a variety of projects. This is likely to consume significant Parks Victoria staff time and is likely to be matched by TaFE/ Deakin staff time.
- Parks Victoria staff time dedicated to training, supervision, etc. of students is also likely to be substantial.

Commercial Viability

Not applicable. However, the utilisation of student resources for land management projects is likely to deliver significant cost savings to Parks Victoria at Tower Hill. Moreover, once student projects have been developed they could be applied/ adapted to other parks/ reserves, providing additional returns to Parks Victoria.

Risks

- Students might provide an inappropriate image of Parks Victoria/ Tower Hill to visitors.
- Poorly planned and/ or executed projects will de-motivate students, education providers and Parks Victoria alike.
- Capital works and project development efforts may provide short-lived benefits if education providers are not committed to Tower Hill in the long term.

Indicative Action Plan

An action plan cannot be developed without extensive involvement of South West Institute of TaFE and Deakin University. The first step in this process is to assure the education providers that Parks Victoria is committed to the Outdoor Campus concept. A Memorandum of Understanding between Parks Victoria and the education providers may help here, as would the establishment of an Advisory Group and Common Objectives for Tower Hill (described previously).

6.4 Bush Foods Trail/s

The bush foods trail basically comprises Aboriginal community cultivation of indigenous flora at Tower Hill, and the harvesting of bush foods for subsequent sale at Tower Hill and elsewhere. On site interpretation would also be included.

Although the area of land revegetated with indigenous flora within the Reserve will not support commercially feasible quantities of bush food, other sites cultivated by the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd (e.g. the revegetated site at Cooma Cooma) will supplement supply. Notwithstanding this, Tower Hill should provide a suitable location for the sale of bush foods.

Under the proposed project the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd would provide:

- the necessary expertise, raw materials and infrastructure required to revegetate land areas in the Reserve with indigenous flora;
- the labour to harvest the bush foods and process/ package the foods where necessary; and
- a retail presence on site for demonstration and interpretation of bush foods and potentially other Aboriginal heritage themes.

To do this Worn Gundidj requires:

- access to areas of land for re-vegetation/ cultivation, to be agreed with Parks Victoria;
- a base from which to operate and sell the bush foods. This base could be provided within the existing Natural History Centre or elsewhere as agreed; and
- a lease agreement that provides occupancy of the aforementioned base for a peppercorn rental, acknowledging the in-kind maintenance work that would be undertaken by Worn Gundidj.

Worn Gundidj advises that it could commence operations immediately given access to land at Tower Hill. Once established it would be possible to complement the bush foods trail with other interpretation activities such as guided tours, etc. The eventual establishment of an Aboriginal Heritage Centre is not out of the question but such a development requires an extensive feasibility study and is not envisaged for at least three to five years.

Bush Foods Trail/s in Summary

Objective

To revegetate areas of land in Tower Hill with indigenous flora, to harvest bush foods from these revegetated areas and to interpret these activities using a retail presence on site.

Advantages

- Increased Aboriginal community engagement in Reserve management and operation.
- Increased presence on site for information and interpretation services for visitors.
- Synergies with other land management activities (e.g. weed control) and other activities (e.g. marketing, interpretation).

Disadvantages

- Capital required for retail outlet infrastructure.

Partnership Opportunities

Worn Gundidj has already shown strong interest and is in the process of negotiating land access with the Framlingham and Gunditjmara communities.

Resource Requirements

- Capital required for retail outlet infrastructure. Costs between \$20,000 and \$50,000 are broadly estimated.
- Legal and other establishment costs (say \$5,000).

Commercial Viability

Lease payments will be peppercorn rentals. In-kind maintenance services will be provided by Worn Gundidj. The value of interpretation services and the ability of Worn Gundidj to obtain alternative funding sources will also prove to be value contributions to Tower Hill.

Risks

- Lack of commitment to site by Worn Gundidj and associated write offs of capital investments.
- Poor quality interpretation/ retail operations.
- Disputes between the area's three overlapping Aboriginal interests (i.e. Worn Gundidj, Framlingham and Gunditjmara).
- Possible conflict with conservation objectives.

Indicative Action Plan

An action plan cannot be developed without extensive involvement of Worn Gundidj. The first step in this process is to assure Worn Gundidj that Parks Victoria is committed to the Bush Foods Trail/s concept. A Memorandum of Understanding between Parks Victoria and Worn Gundidj may help here, as would the establishment of an Advisory Group and Common Objectives for Tower Hill (described previously).

7 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

Strategic directions and a series of projects and programs have been identified to guide the future management of Tower Hill.

Parks Victoria has limited resources to implement these initiatives but there are positive opportunities to form partnerships and involve local organisations and individuals in day-to-day management. Working together, the future of Tower Hill can be assured.

7.2 Recommendations

The Consulting Team makes the following recommendations:

1. Parks Victoria should establish and support an Advisory Group to help manage, coordinate and fund activities within Tower Hill.
2. Parks Victoria should develop a charter for the Advisory Group, establish eligibility criteria for Advisory Group membership, invite selected stakeholders to join the Advisory Group, advertise for community nominations for membership and convene the Advisory Groups' inaugural meeting.
3. Parks Victoria should support the ongoing operations of the Advisory Group where they are in line with Parks Victoria policies and objectives.
4. The agreed conservation and development objectives (outlined in the Environmental Management Plan), should be relatively simple in their application, should be communicated widely so that stakeholders that share goals with Parks Victoria can assess the feasibility of partnership projects at Tower Hill.
5. Parks Victoria needs to assure potential project partners about its commitment to partnership projects at Tower Hill. To do this, Parks Victoria should draft a Memorandum of Understanding between itself and stakeholders identified in this Strategy (i.e. South West Institute of TAFE, Deakin University, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd) and others that are yet to be identified.
6. Parks Victoria should further investigate the feasibility of establishing the Outdoor Campus and Bush Foods Trail/s. To do this, Parks Victoria should investigate licensing, leasing, insurance and other operational requirements demanded by the projects.
7. Parks Victoria should work with the proponents of the Outdoor Campus and Bush Foods Trail/s projects, and proponents of other projects that are in line with the agreed conservation and development objectives (Recommendation 4), to develop detailed action plans and funding submissions.
8. Building on the outcomes stemming from the above recommendations, Parks Victoria should progressively implement synergistic, high priority projects and programs - identified in Section 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 - as resources become available.

9. Once the high priority tasks have been completed, Parks Victoria should review the medium and low priority tasks - identified in Sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 - and progressively incorporate these in future annual funding programs.

An action plan for the approaching these recommendations is provided overleaf.

Task	Responsibility *	Timing 2002											
		2-Sep	9-Sep	16-Sep	23-Sep	30-Sep	7-Oct	14-Oct	21-Oct	28-Oct	Nov	Dec	
Advisory Group													
Develop Charter	PV												
Develop membership criteria	PV												
Advertise for community nominations	PV												
Convene inaugural meeting	PV												
Convene supplementary meetings (qtrly)	PV												
Ongoing Support for Advisory Group													
	PV												
Environment Management Plan (EMP)													
(Agreed Conservation Objectives for Tower Hill)													
Identify additional community stakeholders/ specialists	PV, AG												
Facilitate EMP development workshop	PV, AG, PP												
Produce EMP (i.e. Mudmap)	PV												
Identify high priority projects	PV, AG												
Communicate EMP widely	PV, AG												
Guarantee Commitment to Stakeholders													
Draft Memorandum of Understanding with Stakeholders	PV												
Deliver High Priority, EMP Aligned, Feasible Projects													
Investigate operational requirements for high priority projects	PV, PP												
Coordinate funding/ resources for project specific feasibility assessments	PV												
Commission project specific feasibility assessments	PV, PP												
Develop action plans for feasible projects	PV, PP												
Implement high priority, feasible projects	PV, PP												
Ongoing Review													
Review Future Directions Strategy/ EMP	PV, AG												
Review Management/ Project Delivery Arrangements	PV												
Review Medium and Low Priority Projects	PV, AG												

* Parks Victoria (PV), Advisory Group (AG), Project Proponents (PP)

Responsibility *		2003												2004	
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Ongoing	
p criteria community nominations meeting stary meetings (qtrly)	PV														
	PV														
	PV														
	PV														
	PV														
Advisory Group		PV													
ment Plan (EMP)															
Objectives for Tower Hill)															
community stakeholders/ specialists	PV, AG														
opment workshop	PV, AG, PP														
ludmap)	PV														
rojects	PV, AG														
widely	PV, AG														
nt to Stakeholders															
of Understanding with Stakeholders	PV														
EMP Aligned, Feasible Projects															
nal requirements for high priority	PV, PP														
resources for project specific	PV														
nts	PV, PP														
specific feasibility assessments	PV, PP														
s for feasible projects	PV, PP														
ity, feasible projects	PV, PP														
tions Strategy/ EMP		PV, AG													
nt/ Project Delivery Arrangements	PV														
Low Priority Projects	PV, AG														
Advisory Group (AG), Project Proponents (PP)															

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APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Scope of Information

The Consultant Brief called for the review of several background documents. These can be categorised as strategic framework or site-specific references. The following sections summarise each of the documents from a Tower Hill development viewpoint.

Strategic Framework References

Growing Victoria Together 2001.

This broad Labor Government policy document includes support for environmental protection and an increase in the area covered by native vegetation. It also supports job growth in country Victoria.

Dept. of Natural Resources & Environment Corporate Plan 2001-2004

Vision

Prosperity with Care.

Purpose

To ensure that Victoria's natural and cultural assets are managed to secure social, environmental and economic benefits for both current and future generations.

Objectives

- *Provide demonstrable stewardship of public land estates so that they may be enhances for the benefit of current and future generations.*

To achieve this objective NRE endeavours to:

- *improve the quality of our National Parks and reserves;*
- *support community co-management of public land;*
- *provide a diverse and equitable range of recreation, tourism and educational opportunities that are consistent with the objectives of public land management whilst meeting community needs; and*

- *modify, phase out or ameliorate the impacts of activities that degrade public land.*
- *Apply a whole of government approach to improve Aboriginal well-being through partnerships to achieve aboriginal aspirations for land, culture, heritage, family and community.*

To incorporate consideration of Indigenous issues in day-to-day decision making processes, NRE aims to:

- *build partnerships with Aboriginal Communities;*
 - *undertake co-operative management of public land; and*
 - *improve relationships between Aboriginal communities and the Department.*
- *Increase the Victorian community's access to information and engagement in natural resource and environment decision making.*

To increase community engagement in decision making, NRE aims to:

- *increase community access to information and knowledge to improve decisions;*
- *assist community groups and industry in developing skills to manage natural resources;*
- *partner with the community in projects and programs to conserve and protect the natural environment;*
- *extend institutional arrangements to promote strong, broad-based community involvement in natural resource management at the regional and catchment scale;*
- *increase Indigenous participation in day-to-day decision making processes; and*
- *improve NRE's capability to engage the community effectively.*

Parks Victoria: Healthy Parks Healthy People

The Purpose of Parks Victoria

Healthy Parks Healthy People is the 2000-2001 Annual Report of Parks Victoria. It commences by stating that Parks Victoria exists to:

- *Conserve, protect and enhance environmental and cultural assets;*
- *Responsibly meet the needs of our customers for quality information, services and experiences;*
- *Contribute to the social and economic well-being of Victorians; and*
- *Provide excellence and innovation in park management.*

The Contribution of Volunteers

Given that 2001 was the International Year of the Volunteer, Healthy Parks Healthy People acknowledges the contribution made by volunteers to Victorian parks. Such contributions are certainly relevant to the resourcing of future actions at Tower Hill.

“Volunteers play an invaluable supportive role in removing and controlling pest plants and animals, revegetating sites, enhancing four wheel drive tracks, conserving historic and cultural sites, carrying out surveying, monitoring and research activities, helping out at visitor centres and information desks, educating visitors, lending a hand at special events, taking part in interpretation, guiding and Camp Host programs and helping out with the production of publications, general administration and fundraising”

Parks Victoria, *Healthy Parks Healthy People*, page 2.

Major Works Program funding is used for asset creation, major asset renewal and refurbishment, risk mitigation and heritage restoration works. Some of the projects financed recently include:

- New visitor centre construction and existing centre refurbishments
- Jetty, dam, bridge, public toilet, lookout and other infrastructure construction and re-construction.

Grants Program

The Grants Program is also a potential funding source for development works at Tower Hill. The Parks Victoria Grants Program involves two targeted components: Agency Grants for the Melbourne metropolitan area and state-wide Community Grants.

The aims of the Grants Program are to:

- protect and enhance the natural, cultural and heritage values of Victoria's parks;
- further develop and support the creation of a parks network that includes parks, trails, rivers, creeks and coastlines;
- provide diverse recreational, educational, cultural and tourism opportunities across Victoria; and
- facilitate the involvement of the wider multicultural community in the protection and enhancement of Victoria's parks.

Community Grant funding is available to committed Community Groups throughout Victoria who wish to undertake works on Public Land in the following five categories: Environment, Recreation, Heritage, Community Awareness and Multicultural Diversity.

Given that Tower Hill is on Parks Victoria managed land, Parks Victoria Volunteer Group Grants are the most applicable grant. These funds are available to Community Groups that work in close conjunction with local Parks Victoria staff in order to develop and implement projects.

<http://www.parks.vic.gov.au/>

Moyne Shire Council: Annual Business Plan

The Moyne Shire Council Annual Business Plan documents the strategies and key actions that Council will pursue in several key result areas. Each of those that are relevant to the future of Tower Hill is repeated below.

Strategy	Key Action
Strengthen relationships between Council and all other relevant public authorities	Strengthen relationships with State Government and a range of public authorities which influence the community's lifestyle.
Influence the allocation of external funds for works and services	Increase effort in attracting net increases in grants and funds from outside Council
Improve the appearance and amenity of all towns	- Fund community initiated projects through the Community Assistance Fund - Review service levels and standards for Parks and Town Amenity Services
Plan the improvement of open space, recreation areas, halls and toilets	Not applicable
Implement the Environmental Management Plan	- Work in partnerships with the community and agencies to care for the environment - Develop a noxious weed eradication program
Identify economic development funding opportunities	Identify and promote opportunities for private sector investment
Implement the Tourism Strategy and Tourism Initiatives	- Implement next phase of Signage Strategy - Establish community based Visitor Information Centre at Koroit - Lobby Parks Victoria to prepare plan for Tower Hill re-development
Prepare and implement a Moyne Marketing and Promotion Campaign	- Support festivals and major events - Promote the hinterland including the volcanic values - Review Shipwreck Coast objectives and outcomes and Council's funding support

These strategies and actions must be balanced with Council's 'commitment to ensuring financial viability and accountability while delivering value for money'. Also, Council's goals of 'ensuring the Shire is an attractive and desirable municipality in which to live and work' and 'providing and maintaining an acceptable level of infrastructure and assets' are relevant to Council's support for future actions at Tower Hill.

Warrnambool City Council Corporate Plan

The Warrnambool City Council Corporate Plan 2001-2002 sets a number of Council objectives and actions for the reporting year. Those that are relevant to the future of Tower Hill are as follows.

Objective	Actions
Strengthen regional partnerships	In partnership with other councils and stakeholders, assist clear purpose, efficiency and accountability of regional bodies, including those established for ...tourism, economic development ...and economic/ environmental sustainability. Maintain respected and influential regional role in partnership with other councils, industry business and the community.
Influence the allocation of external funds for works and services	Increase effort in attracting net increases in grants and funds from outside Council
Ensure that residents have access to a range of open space recreation experiences and areas.	Review criteria/ priorities for upgrading local parks, taking into account information from local open space audits and community consultation processes.
Ensure that the recreational and leisure opportunities available in the City meet overall contemporary needs of the community.	Review arrangements for provision of community recreation development services with key stakeholders, also linked to policy for External Service Agreements Management.
Achieve balanced employment/ economic development and wealth generation in Warrnambool.	• Support and encourage the retention and expansion of local business investment in tourism infrastructure. • Develop updated, strategic framework for role/ purposes and benefits/ costs of all major events and festivals, including those not directly auspiced by Council.

Warrnambool's commitment to '*responsible governance*' and '*financial performance*' will influence Councils desire to support developments at Tower Hill.

Moyne Shire Council: Tourism Strategy & Marketing Plan

The Strategy prepared in March 2000 suggests that a Koroit Visitor Information Centre should be established, staffed by volunteers and supported by the Regional Visitor Information centre at Port Fairy. However, Tower Hill is not listed as a possible option for locating the visitor information centre.

The Strategy indicates that Koroit's strengths include:

- Views to and over the Tower Hill State Game Reserve; and
- Tower Hill's regional linkages via the Volcanic Discovery Trail.

Some opportunities for Koroit include:

- The establishment of a crater rim walking track; and
- The local benefits likely to stem from the Volcanic Discovery Trail.

One of the Strategy's recommendations is that strategic signage, encouraging visitation to Koroit, be placed at the Tower Hill exit. This was to be completed by June 2000 with responsibility lying with the Shire's Business and Tourism Unit.

Nature Based Tourism: Directions & Opportunities for Victoria

Tourism Victoria defines nature based tourism as the provision of a range of experiences associated with the natural environment, generally related to an outdoors type activity. The experience can be educational, passive, adventure, cultural or heritage related, or in many cases a combination of several on one trip.

Apart from providing substantial primary data on nature based tourists, the paper provides a positioning of the Great Ocean Road tourism region. The positioning includes Port Campbell coastline, Otway rainforest and coastal scenery, i.e. it implicitly excludes volcanic landscapes and, in doing so, Tower Hill.

Notwithstanding this omission, the general principles embraced by Tourism Victoria are reassuring for Tower Hill. These include:

- Ensuring that tourism is an effective vehicle for conservation;

- Ensuring that nature based tourism delivers the optimum set of economic benefits to the State and regional communities; and
- Acknowledging the importance of regional communities in providing the services and facilities required by nature based tourists.

Finally, most of the opportunities detailed in the paper focus on improving facilities and standards, rather than the development of new attractions. Given Tower Hill's existing position, this could be interpreted positively.

Great Ocean Road Marketing Inc: Strategic Marketing Plan

The Strategic Marketing Plan prepared by Great Ocean Road Marketing Inc. (GORM) provides some background information that is relevant to Tower Hill.

The first of these insights is that whilst growth to the Great Ocean Road is positive, it is uneven, with the bulk of tourism growth accruing to the Surf Coast, Apollo Bay, Port Campbell, Port Fairy and Queenscliff. Moreover, the Great Ocean Road's tourism growth rate lags that of its competitors (e.g. Melbourne, Goldfields, Philip Island, Spa Country).

Warrnambool's relatively poor performance in visitor growth can be attributed to the reluctance of visitors, who are largely organised tour or day trip constrained, to travel further west along the product zone i.e. past Port Campbell. Melbourne remains the origin for most day-trippers.

Although Tower Hill is not specifically mentioned in the opportunities that the GORM will pursue, the following opportunities can be aligned with the reserve:

- Convert day-trippers to return or overnight stays;
- Encourage longer stays and higher spends;
- Highlight unique cultural attractions; and
- Promote scenic walks.

An issue that requires addressing, identified in the Strategic Marketing Plan, is the aim to establish an 'iconic hinterland image', potentially incorporating local produce or volcanic rises. No strategies for pursuing this aim are recorded in the Plan.

Importantly, Tower Hill is not regarded as a unique selling feature, key image or strength of the Great Ocean Road product.

Submission to the Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Development Plan

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) and Parks Victoria (undated) prepared the submission for internal working purposes only. However, the submission has been included in this review, acknowledging that the natural and cultural assets managed by the NRE and Parks Victoria significantly contribute to tourism activities in the Great Ocean Road tourism region.

A key assertion of the submission is that most people visit the public land in the region for the 'naturalness' and the 'scenery'.

Key actions in the submission, which were endorsed by industry recommendations in the regional tourism development plan, include the following.

- *Encourage visitors to explore off the Great Ocean Road and over a greater range of seasons, while maintaining sections of the Great Ocean Road as an essential journey.*
- *Maintain the profile of the Port Campbell National Park and the image of the winding Great Ocean Road as the key regional natural attractions, supplemented by the imaging of the Otways Ranges and rainforests, Western District Volcanic Plains, the Discovery Coast and the Corangamite wetlands.*
- *Develop drive trails based around the Western District Volcanic Plains and wetlands, the Otways forests and parks and the Discovery Coast between Portland and Nelson encompassing the natural values of the area with high quality food, accommodation and opportunities to purchase local products.*
- *Encourage development of more personal guided activities within the key parks, forests and reserves in the region, particularly at Port Campbell, Otway National Park, Angahook-Lorne, Tower Hill, Melba Gully and Lower Glenelg. Investigate use of contractors or concessionaires to perform this task where this does not conflict with existing programs such as Coast Action.*

- *Investigate opportunities for new tourism products such as bike and canoe hire at key sites such as Port Campbell National Park and Tower Hill State Game Reserve respectively.*
- *Re-image Tower Hill State Game Reserve as Tower Hill Volcano for tourism purposes.*

Site-Specific References

Tower Hill Game Reserve – Assessment of Commercial Opportunities

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources commissioned an assessment of commercial opportunities for Tower Hill in 1996. The Government asked for advice with respect to those elements within the reserve that were of a commercial nature as well as the identification of commercial opportunities. It also requested advice concerning the financial, customer service and tourism implications of alternative management options.

KPMG Management Consulting makes the following observation before proceeding in earnest:

“While the reserve can demonstrate a potential for commercialisation, it has yet to proceed to commercial development for reasons which appear to relate to either:

- *the way in which current revenue retention arrangements are struck; and/or*
- *local resistance to the imposition of visitor charges”.*

KPMG go on to say that *“Given the relatively small size of the reserve, it is questionable whether it could sustain a much higher level of visitation without detracting from the reserve’s attractiveness, endangering its wildlife and incurring significant increases in infrastructure costs”.*

Given this, the following commercial opportunities were evaluated:

- Introduction of an entry or parking charge;
- Food and beverage facility establishment;
- Development of Merchandising
- Provision of accommodation facilities; and
- Delivery of specialist education programs.

Within the constraints of the reserve, and after making various assumptions, the estimated receipts and expenses associated with each option were contrasted. The results indicate that only the introduction of an entry or parking charge is financially worthwhile, with the accommodation facilities delivering very limited commercial returns and all other options delivering marginal returns, i.e. they would require ongoing subsidisation.

KPMG Management Consulting stress that any funding for the development of the reserve would come from an appropriately qualified and experienced private sector developer under a Build Own Operate Transfer (BOOT) arrangement. However, throughout the report it is stated on numerous occasions that extensive information gathering and analysis would be required before a private sector operator could evaluate the inherent risk/ return relationships.

Parks Victoria: Visitor Satisfaction Monitor (2000)

The Visitor Satisfaction Monitor (2000) reports the differences between the responses to a questionnaire given by 100 visitors to Tower Hill and the responses elicited from 1670 visitors to 18 comparable parks across Victoria.

Visitors to Tower Hill were interviewed in the Peak Climb Car Park (33 visitors), Natural History Centre (33) and Picnic Area (34).

The questionnaire asks about:

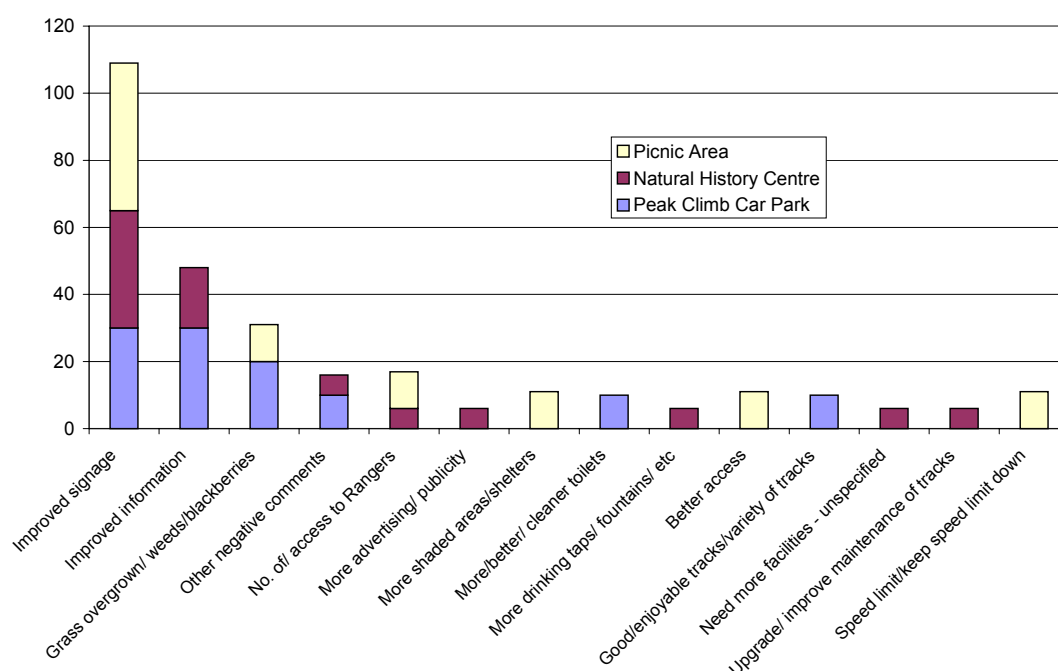
- Visit satisfaction/ dis-satisfaction;
- Satisfaction with park management;
- Suggestions for improvement;
- Reasons for visitation;
- Activities undertaken in the park; and
- Availability of services/ facilities throughout the park.

The findings of the survey are as follows:

- Nine in ten (89%) visitors to Tower Hill were either 'fully satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their visit, making them the most highly satisfied group of visitors included in the surveying process. None of the visitors were 'dissatisfied' with their visit. Notably, visitors interviewed at the Natural History Centre were less satisfied than those in the Peak Climb Car Park or the Picnic Area.
- Eighty six per cent of visitors were either 'fully satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with Parks Victoria's management of the site. This reflects a higher level of satisfaction than what was recorded in the 18 other parks across Victoria collectively. Only 1 of the visitors was dissatisfied with Tower Hill park management.

- Visitors that were not ‘fully satisfied’ were asked if they could offer any suggestions for improvement. The most common responses elicited concerned improved signage and information provision (e.g. signs, maps, brochures, advice, etc.). Overgrown grass/ weeds/ blackberries were also a common concern. Figure 9.2 shows the number of suggestions given and the location from which these suggestions were elicited.

Figure 9.2: Suggestions for Improvements Broken Down by Interview Location.



- By far the two most common reasons for visiting Tower Hill were ‘heard about the park and wanted to see it’ and ‘driving through the area’. These reasons made up 44% of all reasons given at Tower Hill, a much greater proportion of possible reasons that what was recorded elsewhere. Other reasons were ‘live nearby’ and ‘scenery’. Respondents from the Peak Climb Car Park were more likely than others to cite ‘scenery’.

Word of mouth, convenience and aesthetic quality are obviously important determinants of visitation to Tower Hill.

- When compared to other Victorian parks, Tower Hill visitors are more likely to drive, take short-medium walks, picnic, visit a

special site, paint/ draw/ photograph and undertake activities with children. Most of these activities are consistent with the finding that visitors to Tower Hill are more likely to be travelling in a party with children.

On the other hand, Tower Hill visitors are less likely to swim, surf or camp than elsewhere, due to the lack of such opportunities on site.

- The perceived 'availability' and 'quality' of entry roads, pre-visit information and directional/ orientation signs to/ in Tower Hill is below the statewide average. Moreover, the availability of directional/ orientation signs to/ in Tower Hill is considered to be 'below average'.
- Tower Hill visitors did not rate the 'availability' or 'quality' of other services/ facilities at Tower Hill as being respectively 'less than good' or 'below average'. However, a number of services/ facilities fared poorly in terms of their relative 'availability' ratings when compared to the other parks across the state. Table 9.4 highlights those services/ facilities in question (in yellow). It also suggests that the 'quality' of services/ facilities provided at Tower Hill is higher than comparable services/ facilities elsewhere.

Table 9.4: Accessibility and Quality Ratings of Services/ Facilities at Tower Hill and Other Parks in Victoria.

	Accessibility		Quality	
	Tower Hill	Other Parks	Tower Hill	Other Parks
ACCESSIBILITY				
Car parking	2.35	2.3	3.89	3.39
Tracks and paths	2.13	2.39	3.71	3.61
Boat ramp/ launching facilities	-	2.11	-	3.23
GENERAL PARK MANAGEMENT				
Ranger staff availability	2.39	2.27	4.25	3.48
Ranger face to face service	2.42	2.34	4.31	3.74
Litter control measures – adequacy	2.25	2.09	4.08	3.12
Safe access to park facilities	2.06	2.28	3.64	3.46
Appearance of open space/ picnic areas	2.27	2.44	4.08	3.73
Sense of overcrowding	-*	2.35	-*	3.35
Cleanliness of toilets	2.07	2.26	3.87	3.25
RECREATION FACILITIES				
Availability and access to toilets	2.07	2.28	3.63	3.41
Cooking facilities	2.21	2.18	4.23	3.36
Picnic facilities	2.21	2.23	4.2	3.45
Weather shelters	-*	2.35	-	3.46
Kiosks/ cafes/ food outlets	-*	2.5	-	3.2
Drinking water	2.14	2.27	3.86	3.48
Camping in camp grounds	-*	2.53	-	3.89
Camping in wilderness	-*	2.52	-	4.05
Playground facilities	-*	2.38	-	3.21
INFORMATION, INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION				
Information on potential risks and dangers in the park	2.06	2.25	3.42	3.38
Information on regulations	2.04	2.27	3.56	3.42
Information on natural, cultural/ historic features – printed park notes or info	2.29	2.38	4.04	3.66
Information on natural, cultural/ historic features – interpretative signs	2.53	2.34	4.39	3.63
Visitor Information Centre	2.7	2.51	4.6	3.79

Note:

Accessibility scores are an average of visitor responses where 1 = Below Average, 2 = Average and 3 = Above Average. Scores less than 2 indicate that visitors collectively erred towards the Below Average response.

Quality scores are an average of visitor responses where 5 = Excellent, 4 = Very Good, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor.

Moyne Planning Scheme

Local Government Planning Policy (Clause 22.01), as at January 2000, states that it is policy that:

- *Development around the rim of Tower Hill should be regulated in order to minimise the physical and visual impact of any development on the reserve itself.*
- *Sensitively designed tourist-related facilities around the rim of Tower Hill should be encouraged whilst ensuring they do not have a detrimental impact on the views into or out of the reserve.*

Existing Design and Development Overlays (DDO) incorporated into the planning scheme control:

- DDO2 – buildings and development within 500 metres of the southern rim of the crater. A planning permit is required for any building greater than 8m above ground level, and a shed or outbuilding greater than 70sqm or higher than 8m.
- DDO3 – the height and setback of buildings around the rim of Tower Hill. Development heights are restricted to 5m above the midpoint of the adjacent roads, or 5m above the highest point of the land, whichever is the greater. A 20m setback from the boundary near the rim or 10m from the adjacent roads is also required. Also, buildings are to be finished in dark colours to minimise impact on landscape, minimum roof pitch of 15 degrees.

In Moyne Shire's October 2001 Review of the Planning Scheme for Koroit and the Surrounding Area, the protection of the Tower Hill rim from inappropriate development is reiterated.

The following amendments to the Planning Scheme are recommended:

- *Establish a minimum frontage for all subdivisions fronting Tower Hill to minimise the number of houses that can be built on the rim to protect the Crater.*
- *Establish a minimum setback from front and side boundaries for all new houses to reduce the impact of housing on the Crater.*
- *Maintain current height limits.*
- *Introduce controls over reflective materials and colours of buildings and structures.*

Great Ocean Road Tourism Development Strategy

Great Ocean Road Tourism Development Strategy (undated) provides some insights into Tower Hill that are useful. They are repeated below (verbatim).

The carpark in the centre of the reserve is not often at capacity, although parking has been constrained during special events.

Tower Hill State Game Reserve is reasonably well signposted in the immediate area such as the town of Koroit and the Princes Highway. However, a 'brown' VicRoads sign with brief information located in Warrnambool and Port Fairy, would assist in attracting other visitors who may not be aware of the reserve's features.

The entrance to the park is often a source of confusion for the visitor, and is in need of review, however, works are confined due to the small area between the rim of the volcano and the Princes Highway.

...many potential visitors may be discourage by the term 'State Game Reserve'...it is considered that the existing name is incompatible with attitudes in today's society and the emphasis on conservation of wildlife.

Tower Hill is part of the Mahogany Walking Track, a long distance walking track between Warrnambool and Port Fairy along the coast and returning along a disused railway line (future rail trail). However, the costal component of the walk is the only section currently being used, and the overall usage appears to be low due to poor promotion and low standard infrastructure (signage, track, surface, etc.).

The Strategy recommended that:

- The name of the reserve is changed to 'Tower Hill Volcanic Reserve'.
- The reserve entry area is upgraded.
- Wider guiding services including canoe tours are introduced.
- Signage is improved and staffing of the Natural History Centre is increased.
- The potential for development of a saleable or hireable cassette tape interpreting main features of the reserve is investigated.

APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Bill Owens	South West Institute of TAFE
Brett Cheatley	Parks Victoria (Regional Manager)
Cheryl Nagel	Parks Victoria (Chief Ranger/ Visitor Services)
Chris Ashe	NRE
David Beard	South West Institute of TAFE
Debra Couzens	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative
Friends of Tower Hill	
Gail Cuolahan	Shipwreck Coast Tourism Association
Ian Walker	Parks Victoria (Environment)
Ivan Couzens	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative
John Amor	Former Ranger in Charge (Tower Hill)
John McInerney	Parks Victoria (Tower Hill)
Neil Martin	Framlingham Aboriginal Trust
Norm Henry	VicRoads Warrnambool
Paul Albone	Tourism Victoria
Peter Coverdale	Parks Victoria (Tower Hill)
Phil Ingamells	Victorian National Parks Association
Prof. Phillip Goad	University of Melbourne
Prof. Robert Wallis	Deakin University Warrnambool
Ray Supple	Parks Victoria (Historic Places)
Roger Grant	Geelong Otway Tourism
Stuart Toplis	Tourism Victoria
Tim Hubbard	Heritage Council of Victoria
Vicki Couzens	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative
Staff of	Moyne Shire Council
Staff of	Warrnambool City Council

APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DRAFT STRATEGY

NUMBER OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED TO 22 AUGUST 2002

- | | |
|----------------------------|----|
| • Agencies/Institutions | 2 |
| • Community organisations: | 5 |
| • Individuals | 11 |

Submissions received from:

1. South-west TAFE, Barrie Baker
2. Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Eddie Meulman
3. Bird Observers Club, Richard Stevens
4. Warrnambool Field Naturalists Club, J Yeoman
5. Corangamite Volcanic Trail and Centre Advisory Committee, Josie Black
6. Friends of Tower Hill Inc., K Hollis
7. John and Diane Amor
8. Jodie Honan, Pt Fairy
9. Barbara Garrett, Warrnambool
10. Jill Heathcote, Warrnambool
11. Stuart Johnson, Warrnambool
12. Thomas Hyland, Warrnambool
13. Anthony Sharkey, Koroit
14. Michael Wright, Koroit
15. R, A and M Faragher, Koroit
16. Joyce F Fitzgerald, Koroit
17. Keith Davis, Kirkstall
18. Victorian National Parks Association

Overview of comments

A wide range of comments was received. Some were generally supportive of the Strategy but others were critical of the contents, recent management practices and resource allocations. There was also some concern at the perceived emphasis on visitor facilities and economic issues.

Land management issues were of concern to many respondents, particularly weed and pest animal control, management of koalas and other large mammals and declining bird populations.

A series of corrections and additions were suggested.

Many responses reflected strong community affection for and commitment to Tower Hill.

All comments were tabulated by the project consultants for consideration by Parks Victoria before revisions are made to the draft Strategy. There was strong support for the formation of an advisory group.

Summary of submissions

The main comments and suggested changes are summarised in the following table. Overall comments are listed first followed by comments on specific sections of the Strategy.

Only the key points from a very detailed letter submitted by Jodie Honan have been included. Detailed comments in the letter will be considered in revising the draft Strategy.

Draft Strategy Section	Section no.	Sub'n no.	Comment / issue
Overall comments		1	- Commend work done and general thrust of recommendations. - Does not have a clear overall objectives or conservation objective.
		3	- Welcome initiative to produce Strategy. Tower Hill is one of most accessible and productive bird watching sites. - Overemphasis on exploitation, i.e. tourism use – need process to establish agreed management objectives. Emphasise natural values.
		6	
		7	- Very deficient report, naive, lacking in depth. An apology for present managers. - Why doesn't funding relate to level of community appreciation and use? (cf Jells, Pt Cook parks.) - Explain reduction from 3 to 0.8 staff. - Ignores/downplays outcomes of forum, sidesteps environmental values, lacks direction

Draft Strategy Section	Section no.	Sub'n no.	Comment / issue	
		8	- Strategy is welcome effort to summarise issues and suggest opportunities. Key aspect is changing attitudes to the area and interaction of community with the land. There are lessons to build on from the work done in the 1950s and 1960s. - Face to face interpretation and Aboriginal involvement are important directions, and more emphasis on experiences for children. “The local community helped to create Tower Hill, and they love it.” - The Strategy should be more frank in acknowledging the past, and in describing the present situation – and braver in imagining the future.	
		9	Concerned about weeds, lack of cleared tracks and degradation of park.	
		10	No detail on PV staffing and works.	
		11	- Give high priority to wildlife management – balance tourist facilities with this. - A rare piece of natural history.	
		14	- Very disappointed – poorly researched and put together, tries to bail out PV, trivialises importance of site, etc. - Ignores community views and environmental impacts. - No direction. - Some information out of date.	
		16	“I just can’t understand how our beautiful icon was allowed to run down over the last 4 years ...”	
		17	In largely cleared area, any bushland area is important for future generations	
		18	Improved resource management based on sound environmental management plan.	
		Summary		
		Introduction	1.1	6
1.2	3		Value as flora reserve – particularly for birds – is important.	
	6, 14		Need to explain survey results – is satisfaction just related to seeing animals/scenery?	
	7		- Survey done when 3 Rangers - Also satisfaction of new visitors likely to relate to wildlife and scenery	
	10		Locals not represented in visitors book. Survey does not monitor neglect by PV – more related to seeing wildlife.	
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Draft Strategy Section	Section no.	Sub'n no.	Comment / issue
	1.3		
Background Information	2.1	7	Several important events missed
	2.2	14	Some tracks unusable and signs missing.
	2.3	14	Numbers declining due to lack of maintenance and service to school groups.
Community Concerns and Aspirations	3.1	14	- Turned away from forum due to high numbers - Friends have been treated like dirt; PV doing less.
	3.2	6 7	- Several important stakeholders missed. - Locks out indigenous community
SWOT	4.1 S	2	Emphasise importance for wetland species, particularly birds.
		9	Birds, bird watching important.
	4.2 W		
	4.3 O		
	4.4 T	3	Reductions in birds
		7	- Major threat is PV - Threat to threatened species due to lack of flushing
		14	Include lack of flushing, salt build-up – refer to Deakin report. Pipes bought years ago.
Possible Projects & Programs	5.1.1	1	Staff and students could prepare landscape plan options.
		4, 18	No duck shooting; no food outlet.
		4	Provide full time ranger/caretaker.
		3, 9, 15, 16	Against canoeing and camping.
		6	Education Officer was hired for Tower Hill but moved to Pt Campbell. Resigned and not replaced.
		7, 14	Rim carparks are on PV land – Councils got involved when PV withdrew resources. Technically illegal.
		7, 14	- Education should be more than low priority. - Include consideration of returning staffing to pre PV levels.
		10	- Ban duck shooting. - Should be ranger on duty.
		11	Upgrade bbq and picnic facilities.
		4, 10, 12, 14	Maintenance inadequate (e.g. roads, long grass along tracks, bbqs).
		15, 17, 7	Against entry fees.
		16	Tourists should pay a small fee.
		17	- Good tourism operator could provide interpretation services to fee paying visitors. - Make more of Aboriginal heritage
		18	Support improved education and interpretation services
	51.2	2	Give higher priority to flora and fauna.
		2, 12	Predator control important; control foxes and rabbits (3).

Draft Strategy Section	Section no.	Sub'n no.	Comment / issue
		2, 10, 12, 14, 17	Address koala/large mammal population issue more adequately; control numbers. (Consider connecting corridors on private land; koalas have caused major decline in birds).
		3	- Reduction of bird species from approx 140 to 100 due to inadequate management etc. - Consider arboretum – drawcard.
		6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17	Weeds major problem – (e.g. hemlock spraying unsuccessful; do not use herbicides – damage in past, weeds spreading into farms, need action over whole reserve).
		10, 14	Boundary fence inadequate – cattle in reserve in past.
		10, 11	No buildings permitted near crater rim; a serious issue.
		11	Survey / document wildlife.
		17	Upgrade to national or regional park to increase support and appeal.
	5.1.3	5	Extend and rename centre: Tower Hill Volcanic Interpretation centre – regional centre for info, ed, interps, research etc.
		11, 12, 15, 7	- Against food sales (4). - Spend money on person in centre, not upgrade.
		16	Traditional owners could sell art and craft etc.
	5.1.4	4, 5, 18	Support name – Tower Hill Volcanic Reserve.
		10, 12, 17	- Promote more for bird watching (1), volcanics (2) - More publicity, signs supported (1).
		11, 15	Against festivals.
		14	Was audiovisual show in centre – repair?
	5.1.5	1	- Happy to contribute to advisory group and have students involved. Materials from others. Not able to contribute regular staffing. - Outdoor campus would need facilities; could involve range of students.
		4	Friends to have access to advisory group.
		6	- Friends have been omitted by PV. - PV should draw on knowledge base in community, Friends and tour operators.
		18	Support close working relationship with friends
		7, 14	Support Friends in line with PV policy on volunteers.
		17	Supports advisory group, Deakin involvement, Aboriginal role.
		7	- Advisory group proposal seems to bypass Friends. - Consider giving Friends half membership positions. - Improving relations with Friends is first priority. Should have goal of improved communications.
Preferred projects	6/1	7, 14	Tertiary institutes do not have adequate landscape design skills.

Draft Strategy Section	Section no.	Sub'n no.	Comment / issue
	6/2	7	• Establish partnership with ARI/KTRI for pest plant biological experiments
	6/3	14	• Secluded centre was aim.
	6/4		
	6/5	7,14	• Reinstitute support for friends.
Conclusions			

APPENDIX D: PARK NOTES SHEET FOR TOWER HILL