



October 2024

Getting more from school grounds

Sharing places for play and exercise



About us

Infrastructure Victoria is an independent advisory body with 3 functions:

- preparing a 30-year infrastructure strategy for Victoria, which we review and update every 3 to 5 years
- advising the government on specific infrastructure matters
- publishing research on infrastructure-related issues.

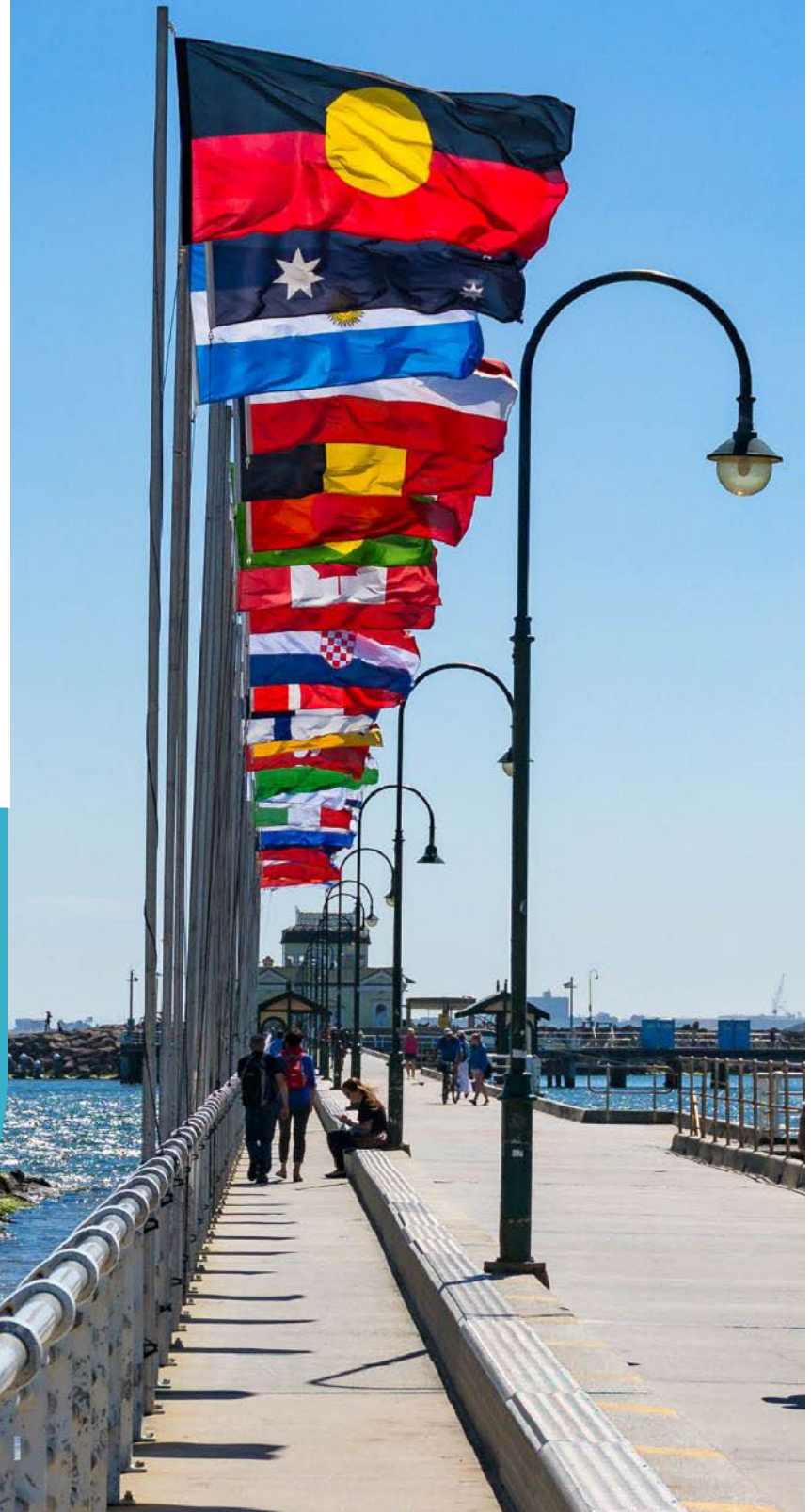
Infrastructure Victoria also helps government departments and agencies develop sectoral infrastructure plans.

Infrastructure Victoria aims to take a long-term, evidence-based view of infrastructure planning, and we inform community discussion about infrastructure provision.

Infrastructure Victoria does not directly oversee or fund infrastructure projects.

Acknowledgement

Infrastructure Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria and pays respect to their Elders past and present, as well as Elders of other First Peoples' communities. We recognise that Victoria's infrastructure is built on land that has been managed by Aboriginal people for millennia.





Contents

Summary	3
Shared access uses less land and helps keep communities healthy	6
Land is scarce and expensive in growing cities	6
Reduced access to informal recreation has health costs	7
People informally use school grounds when they can	8
Sharing school grounds outside school hours	10
Most schools already share their grounds	10
Shared school grounds deliver value to communities	11
Schools as community hubs produce more benefits	13
Shared school grounds can have challenges	15
Actions to support schools to share their grounds	18
Prioritise sites that deliver the most benefits	18
Fund a voluntary program to support schools to share their grounds	20
Upgrade select school facilities to be suitable for shared use	22
Endnotes	23

Summary

As Victoria's cities grow and become more compact, people will still need places to play and exercise. A larger, denser population will increase demand for open spaces, while higher land prices will make it more expensive to create new ones. If Victoria's cities become more compact, governments must ensure people still have access to quality open spaces for play and exercise. Better access to school grounds, which include sports fields, outdoor courts and playgrounds, can improve access to public open space and help meet the demands that growing, more compact cities will have over time.

This report investigates opportunities to make more government school grounds available outside school hours. This is cheaper than buying expensive land to build recreational facilities separately, and can deliver similar health, wellbeing and social inclusion benefits.

Victoria will add another 3.5 million people between 2023 and 2051.¹ The Victorian Government is also proposing housing targets for each local government area to create more housing choice in areas with existing and planned public transport, jobs, and services.² Victorian land values are rising rapidly. The Victorian Valuer-General estimated statewide total site values more than doubled between 2014 and 2023.³ All levels of government are experiencing tighter fiscal settings. In this environment, all government agencies must use land efficiently, and manage their infrastructure to maximise community benefits.

Our previous research report, *Density done well*, found that people considered access to adequate green and open spaces a central component of quality urban design. They indicated that providing sufficient access to open space was essential for communities to support higher housing densities.⁴ In another research report, *Choosing Victoria's future*, we found that while compact cities have many benefits and lower infrastructure costs overall, open space infrastructure might cost more when compared to dispersed cities.⁵

If governments can find ways to use existing open spaces more intensively, these costs for compact cities might be lower. Low density Victorian cities, such as Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong, have less need to intensify the use of their open spaces now, but might need to if they become more compact.⁶ The Victorian Government's open space strategy for Melbourne is already investigating opportunities to increase access and encourage co-investment to allow greater community use of school grounds, without jeopardising its primary use.⁷ This report builds on that work.

Inactive lifestyles cause health problems. Many chronic health conditions are avoidable through an active lifestyle, but half of all Victorians are not getting enough exercise.⁸ Playing sport is one way for people to stay active. But only 33% of children aged between 5 and 9 in Melbourne's growth areas play sport, compared to 71% in Victoria's regional growth areas.⁹ And women and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are more likely to exercise informally, rather than join a sporting club.¹⁰

Whether people can access local open space affects how much exercise they do.¹¹ Some people are inactive because they have few free options to exercise near their home.¹² Most Victorian households (55%) use outdoor sports fields in their local area.¹³ This is a major type of open space people use to stay healthy and well. Being outdoors and connecting with nature can also help people improve and maintain their mental wellbeing.¹⁴

Definitions

Sports fields are large open areas designated for sporting use. Sometimes referred to as an oval, they are often made of grass or a synthetic grass-like surface. Sports fields can be used for organised sports, such as by sporting clubs, informal sports, and for play, exercise, like jogging or walking, and sports practice.

Outdoor courts are hard surfaced areas, such as asphalt, concrete, or a synthetic hard surface. They usually have line marking to enable the playing of ball sports such as netball, basketball, or games like foursquare. They can be used for both organised and informal sports but also for general play, exercise and practice. They are separate from indoor courts which are located inside of buildings, such as a stadium, school hall or gymnasium.

Playgrounds are areas with play equipment, such as slides, sandpits, and climbing frames, that are separate from fields and outdoor courts. They are often built on areas that have a surface appropriate for the safety of children using the equipment, such as tanbark.

Recreational facilities is a collective term for sporting and recreational infrastructure located on one site. **Outdoor recreational facilities** include sports fields, outdoor courts and playgrounds. These facilities are often owned by local governments and, for the purposes of this report, it is assumed that they are publicly accessible for general use.

School grounds is a collective term for all the outdoor recreational facilities on a school site, and the outdoor areas that provide access to them. For the purposes of this report, 'school grounds' does not include school buildings.

In this research, we examined access to and availability of sports fields, outdoor courts and playgrounds on government school grounds. These recreational facilities use substantial amounts of land and are expensive for governments to construct and maintain. For example, sports fields and outdoor courts on state government school land use about 450 hectares of space in Melbourne – the equivalent of 110 Melbourne Cricket Grounds.¹⁵

Public schools and local governments own many recreational facilities. Schools typically build recreational facilities, such as sports fields, outdoor courts and playgrounds, to give their students a well-rounded experience of physical education and sport, and to host outdoor activities for their school. Local governments also provide many different recreational facilities for their communities, including sports fields, outdoor courts and playgrounds.¹⁶

These 2 purposes can be combined on the same site. A school can use their grounds during school hours, and the community can access them after school hours or on the weekends to play and stay physically active. This is a more efficient use of land than building multiple recreational facilities for schools and communities to use separately.

Our research found that about two-thirds of government schools already make their school grounds available for informal public use outside school hours. Many government school gyms and sports fields, rooms for health services, theatres and other resources are shared with their wider communities after hours and on weekends.¹⁷ A small number of schools provide out-of-hours access only during the week, only on weekends or only for some other limited time. A few schools also use local government owned sports fields during school hours. Non-government schools possess similar recreational facilities, but we did not include them in our analysis as they are not government assets.

When we examined government school grounds that were not available for informal use, we found they were unevenly distributed. Schools and communities in Melbourne's eastern suburbs and regional Victoria are more likely to share school grounds. But school grounds in Melbourne's outer northern, western and southeastern suburbs are less likely to be available for informal community use outside school hours.¹⁸ These are also places where people are less likely to have an alternative sports field nearby. Our research

finds sharing school grounds in these places could provide the most benefit as these are areas where people are less likely to get a healthy level of exercise.

Sharing school grounds can have challenges. Recreational facilities that are shared between schools and communities are more intensively used than if they are reserved for school use only, meaning they can cost more to maintain. They also might need to be constructed to a higher standard to withstand more intensive use. Schools express concerns about damage or anti-social behaviour on school grounds at times when they are unsupervised. Neighbours can raise complaints where community users are noisy out of school hours. Schools might also have to navigate legal, insurance, safety and other issues relating to sharing, and still ensure the school can use their facilities for their primary educational purpose.

In our consultations on this topic, people often raised concerns of funding, resources and appropriate responsibilities for different agencies. They also highlighted the existing high administrative load for school leaders and staff. We encourage governments to secure appropriate resources for schools in priority areas to help them share their grounds. Shared school grounds are likely more expensive and more complex to manage and maintain. But ultimately, this is likely far cheaper than the alternative of building separate recreational facilities or bearing the social and health costs of leaving communities without access to open spaces for play and exercise.

We make 3 recommendations to the Victorian Government to help make more school grounds available for informal community use. We make these recommendations to help improve the available resources and encourage collaboration between the Victorian Government, schools, communities and local governments. In doing so we recognise they may have to resolve some operational and funding challenges and identify some ways these challenges can be addressed.

Recommendations

1. Prioritise which government school grounds could deliver the greatest benefits if they were shared with local communities outside school hours

Compile a list of specific school grounds that deliver the greatest benefits from sharing for informal community use outside school hours, especially in Melbourne's west, north and south-east. Places that deliver the greatest benefits are where:

- surrounding neighbourhoods have relatively little outdoor recreational facilities available for informal use
- school grounds have enough space and recreational facilities to meaningfully add to the informal recreational options in the area
- local community characteristics indicate large benefits from extra informal recreation, such as health risk factors and low participation in organised sport.

2. Give these schools extra help for maintenance if they voluntarily share their grounds outside school hours

Provide additional government funding to the Department of Education to help schools manage extra maintenance and other costs if school grounds are voluntarily shared outside school hours.

3. Offer funding for upgrades to incentivise shared access outside school hours

Offer schools and local councils infrastructure grants for joint partnerships that deliver better shared outdoor recreational facilities in priority areas. Grants should be conditional on these facilities being available for the educational needs of school students and permit informal use by the community outside school hours. Require both partners to reach mutual agreement on any extra maintenance, cleaning and other responsibilities generated by use outside school hours.

Shared access uses less land and helps keep communities healthy

Land is scarce and expensive in growing cities

The Victorian Government projects that the state's population will grow by 3.5 million people between 2023 and 2051.¹⁹ Greater Geelong, the Surf Coast and the Colac-Otway area are expected to have the largest population growth outside of Melbourne, growing by 214,000 people by 2051. The Central Highlands, which includes Ballarat, is projected to increase by 131,000 people.²⁰

Melbourne's population will reach 8 million people by 2051.²¹ This is over 50% more people than in 2023. The government projects that Melbourne's north, west and southeast suburbs will quickly house large numbers of extra people. The local government areas of Wyndham, Melton, Casey, Hume and Whittlesea are projected to have the most extra people.²² The government is also proposing housing targets for each local government area to create more housing choice in areas with existing and planned public transport, jobs, and services in Melbourne.²³

Our previous research report, *Density done well*, found that people considered access to adequate green and open spaces a central component of quality urban design. They indicated that providing sufficient access to open space was essential for communities to support higher housing densities.²⁴

As cities become more compact, more people will want to use recreational spaces. For example, 55% of Victorian households used an outdoor sports field in their local area in the last year.²⁵ Our research finds that by 2036, without any extra sports fields, between 4% and 13% fewer people will have easy access to sports fields in Melbourne's new suburbs.²⁶ But even places with slower population growth will have challenges. More people will also live in established suburbs and must share limited existing outdoor recreational facilities.²⁷ In some cases, they might become crowded or unavailable for people to meaningfully use for informal exercise.

Creating new open spaces is expensive. We estimate that Melbourne's growing population will need over 900 extra hectares for all types of open space, including spaces for recreation, by 2036.²⁸ Victorian land values are rising rapidly. The Victorian Valuer-General estimated statewide total site values more than doubled between 2014 and 2023.²⁹ Purchasing the land to construct this open space could cost up to \$3 billion.³⁰ Even if governments could afford rising land prices, they could probably not find enough large parcels of land for many new sports fields.

Instead, governments can help reduce the demand for new recreational space by providing the resources to create more shared sports facilities on existing and future government school sites. This can help governments avoid buying unnecessary extra land. All levels of government are experiencing tighter fiscal settings. In this environment, all government agencies must use land efficiently, and manage their infrastructure to maximise community benefits.

In our research report *Choosing Victoria's future*, we found that while compact cities have many benefits and lower infrastructure costs overall, open space infrastructure might cost more compared to dispersed cities.³¹ If governments can find ways to use existing open spaces more intensively, these costs for compact cities might be lower. Regional cities like Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo are growing, but are still low-density cities.³² These cities might experience similar land constraints to Melbourne as they grow and become more compact over time.

The Victorian Government's *Open space strategy* states that it is already acting to 'investigate opportunities to work with the Department of Education, local governments, schools and communities to increase access and encourage co-investment to improve facilities, allowing greater community use without jeopardising

primary use and with consideration of amenity and local surrounds'.³³ This can include sharing school sports fields, outdoor courts and playgrounds.

In this report, we have primarily examined the potential of sharing government school grounds with the wider community, some of which are closed to the broader public. Sometimes, there may also be opportunities for existing local government sports fields to be shared with schools who require more access to sports facilities. We did not include non-government school grounds in our analysis as they are not government assets.

Reduced access to informal recreation has health costs

Inactive lifestyles cause health problems. The Victorian Department of Health and AUSactive call inactive lifestyles 'the new smoking' because they contribute to many chronic health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes and cancer.³⁴

Many chronic health conditions are avoidable through an active lifestyle, but half of all Victorians are not getting enough exercise.³⁵ The Australian Government Department of Health recommends that the average adult exercises moderately for 2–5 hours each week. It recommends children exercise moderately for one hour each day.³⁶ People who do less are at higher risk of adverse physical and mental health conditions.³⁷

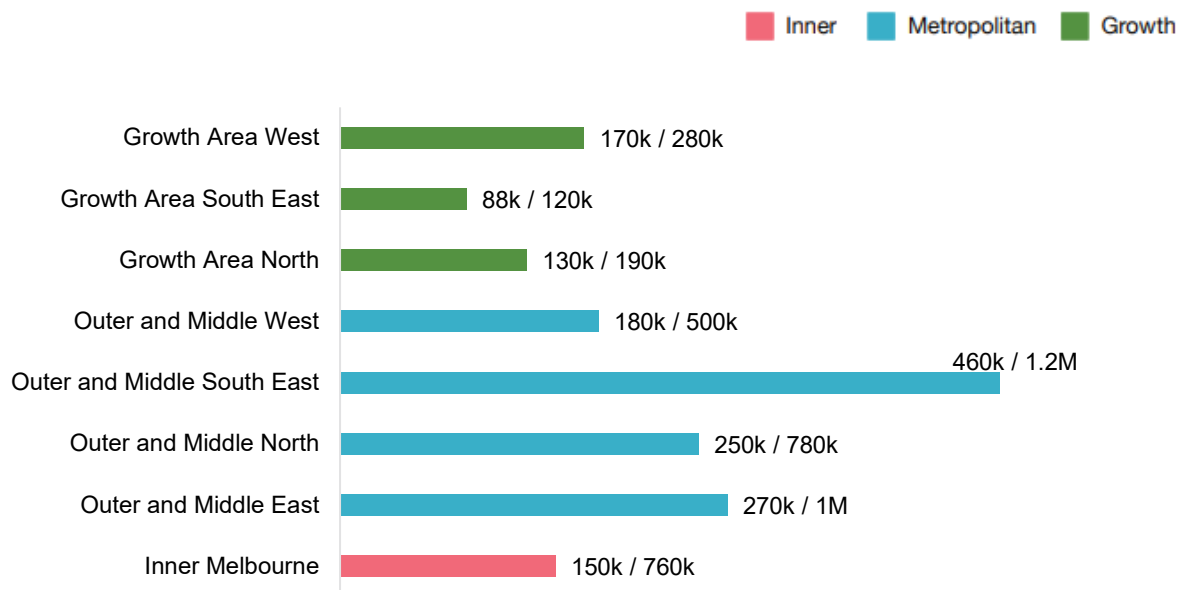
Playing sport is one way for people to stay active.³⁸ People who live in regional areas, including regional cities, participate in sports at a higher percentage than people in metropolitan Melbourne.³⁹ In regional growth areas, 71% of children aged between 5 and 9 play sport, compared to only 33% in Melbourne's growth areas.⁴⁰ People living in Melbourne's growth areas also participate less in sport than people living in Melbourne's established suburbs. Melbourne's growth areas have some of the lowest sports participation rates in Victoria.⁴¹

Many people choose to stay active by exercising informally, rather than by participating in organised sport. Four out of 5 Victorian women who exercise regularly do not participate in organised sport.⁴² People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are also more likely to participate in informal exercise rather than join a sporting club.⁴³

Where people live and whether they can access open space affects how much exercise they do.⁴⁴ Some people are inactive because they have few free options to exercise near their home.⁴⁵ Our modelling found many people living in Melbourne's new and outer suburbs were not able to walk to an outdoor sports field within 10 minutes (see Figure 1). Access to open space has benefits beyond just physical health. It can bring families together, creates community connection and reduces isolation. Being outdoors and connecting with nature can improve mental wellbeing.⁴⁶

Figure 1 shows the total number of people, out of the total population for the region, who cannot access an outdoor sports field within a 10-minute walk. Melbourne is grouped into 8 regions.

Figure 1 Melburnians who cannot reach an outdoor sports field within a 10-minute walk



Source: Arup, 'Social infrastructure mapping: outdoor sports fields', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 3.

People informally use school grounds when they can

Victorians use school grounds for informal recreation when they are shared with the community. We commissioned a survey to find out people's views on access to recreational facilities and out-of-hours access to school grounds. We received responses from a representative sample of over 4,000 Victorians.⁴⁷

Over half of our survey respondents said they used local sports fields in the last year.⁴⁸ Those who used sports fields mainly did so for active recreation, like walking or jogging (59%), organised sports (25%), or informal activities, like kicking a football with friends (42%) dog walking (39%) or having picnics and enjoying nature (29%).

Of our survey respondents who said they did not currently use any recreational facilities, one in 5 said they would use school grounds outside of school hours if they were available.⁴⁹ From this group, people were more likely to say they would use sports fields (62% men and 55% of women). People from non-English speaking backgrounds in particular said they were more likely to use sports fields in their area if school grounds were available for this purpose in the future (34%).⁵⁰ Women were much more likely to say they would use playgrounds (47% of women compared to 35% of men).⁵¹

Most local councils state that their communities need more open space. We reviewed all Melbourne councils' open space strategies. Four out of 5 councils support more recreational use of government land, including sharing government school grounds for people to use for informal recreation.⁵²

Shared grounds provide families with open space and exercise opportunities in urban areas

For stay-at-home dad Matt Shaw, having access to shared school grounds after hours was one of the reasons he and his family bought their townhouse in the inner suburbs of Melbourne.

‘We don’t have a backyard, and having spaces that are very close to our home, where we don’t have to cross the street to get to, it makes a huge difference.’

The nearby specialist school is open to the community after school hours and on weekends, sharing part of its outdoor grounds and play equipment.

With 2 boys aged 4 and 2, proximity was very important to Matt. ‘I can walk to the playground with my 2-year-old, I don’t need to take a stroller or anything else. Removing the barrier of transport and having access to open space that is fenced and safe is critical since we live in a densely populated area.’

‘The next closest playground is further away across a main road, not fenced and not as well maintained as the facilities at the school. Because the school facilities have a small basketball court, the space will serve us well as the children get older and lose interest in some of the playground equipment.’

Matt’s family uses the school’s grounds 5 times a week, and more often during school holidays. They will often socialise with other families who use the shared space, and it has developed into a small community through chance meet ups as well.

Other families who use the shared school grounds have held birthday parties on weekends.

The school’s shared facilities are secure and fenced, so Matt feels that this is a safer space for his children to play. Matt’s eldest son loves having a circular path to ride his bike around. ‘There is also the benefit of passive surveillance. Because it is an enclosed space, as opposed to a public park, I feel that the kids are safer because other parents know who I am.’

Because the school is nearby, Matt recognises the benefits this provides as his children get older. ‘They don’t have to go far and don’t have to cross a road to get to the shared school grounds. This means as they get older, I feel comfortable giving them some independence much earlier than I would at a public park.’



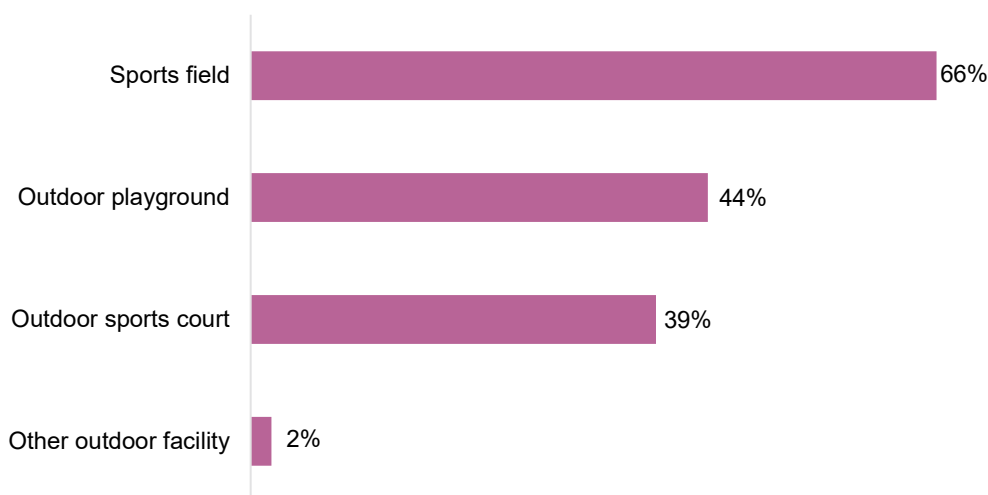
Sharing school grounds outside school hours

Most schools already share their grounds

Our data analysis found that the majority of government schools already share their grounds outside of school hours.⁵³ Also, our consumer survey shows that one in 5 households already use outdoor recreational facilities on government school grounds outside school hours. Of those who use school grounds, they mainly access sports fields, playgrounds and outdoor courts (see Figure 2).⁵⁴

Figure 2 shows the proportion of households using each type of school outdoor area, expressed as a percentage of those households who use school grounds.

Figure 2: Victorians' use of outdoor government school recreational facilities



Source: Quantum Market Research, 'Access to social infrastructure consumer research', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 101.

Victorian Government policies encourage community use of government school grounds, and most schools allow this.⁵⁵ But some schools do not make their grounds available for informal use by the community outside school hours. This might reflect different considerations, such as:

- the school council's attitude to sharing the grounds
- managing maintenance, insurance, repairing damage, and the potential for anti-social behaviour or the misuse of assets
- the views of neighbouring residents
- existing arrangements with local governments or organisations for allowing public use
- concerns about school liability and asset condition
- contractual arrangements with asset managers for schools in public-private partnership agreements.

We found that almost all schools in regional Victoria already share their grounds with their communities outside school hours.⁵⁶ Even in the fastest growing regional towns and cities, increasing access to school grounds for out-of-hours use only moderately contributed to increasing community access to sports fields.⁵⁷ This means the places likely to generate the most benefit from more access to school grounds are in Melbourne.

Shared school grounds deliver value to communities

Sports fields, outdoor courts and playgrounds are expensive government assets. The total land value of government school sports fields and outdoor courts in Melbourne is about \$6.6 billion.⁵⁸ Government school sports fields and outdoor courts make up about 450 hectares of space in Melbourne – the equivalent of 110 Melbourne Cricket Ground ovals.⁵⁹ We estimate that it would cost about \$8 million to provide the open space equivalent to the average government school site in Melbourne.⁶⁰ To separately provide these recreational facilities, governments would need to buy significant land to produce the equivalent benefits.

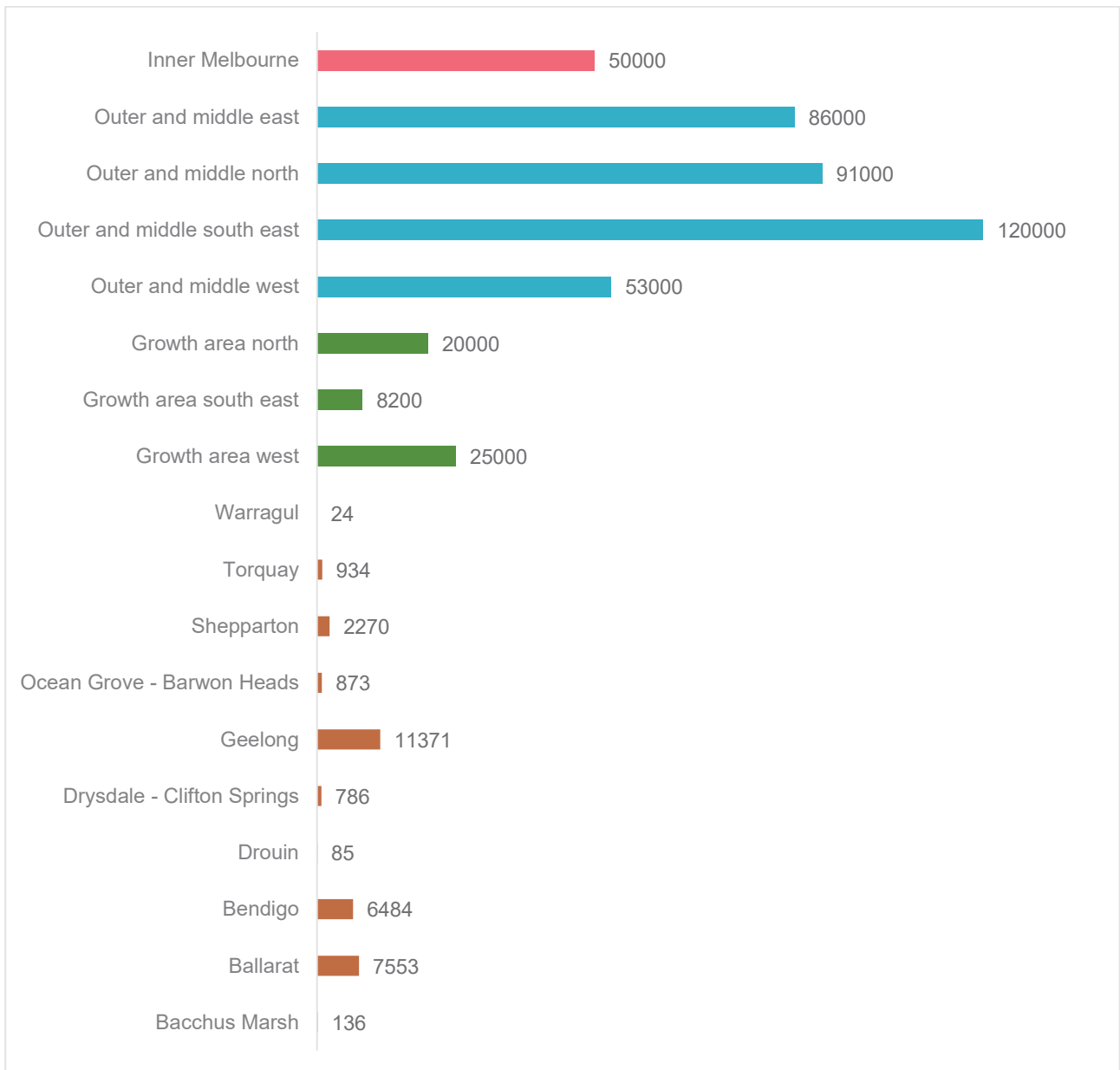
We found that 1.7 million Melburnians cannot reach a community sports field within a 10-minute walk. If all school grounds were open, an extra 453,000 people could reach a school sports field instead.⁶¹ Almost all the people who can benefit from this access live in Melbourne's middle and outer suburbs.⁶² It also shows the largest numbers in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, although other data we analysed suggests most of these schools are already open.⁶³

'The biggest users of our school spaces after hours are members of our local community, but often not school families. We encourage community use of our grounds and invest in our facilities to ensure it continues because we know the community benefit is there.'

School leader, Charles Latrobe P-12 College. Source: VicHealth, '[Activating open spaces in schools for community use](#)', December 2023, p 18.

Figure 3 shows the potential extra access to sports fields if all school grounds were shared, compared to a scenario where none were. Some schools already share their grounds, while others do not. Our analysis shows schools in Melbourne's west, north and south-east are more likely to restrict public access. Many in Melbourne's eastern suburbs are already shared.

Figure 3: Hypothetical extra access to sports field if all school grounds were accessible, in Melbourne and fastest growing regional centres



Source: Arup, 'Social infrastructure mapping: outdoor sports fields', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 11.

Schools as community hubs produce more benefits

When communities can use school grounds outside school hours, the school can be a hub for community activity. Schools as community hubs provide more benefits. This is particularly true in urban centres which have limited social infrastructure.⁶⁴

Schools can provide better social infrastructure as community hubs in different ways. These include:

- sharing use of sports halls, playgrounds, meeting rooms, libraries and classrooms for community spaces
- offering education to learners apart from the children who attend the school
- enabling community involvement in school activities
- supporting environmental sustainability
- becoming a catalyst for urban regeneration and socially sustainable mixed development.⁶⁵

Co-locating and sharing community facilities and services with schools can have major benefits for local communities. These benefits include giving people access to more amenities and creating a sense of community pride in the school.⁶⁶

The Victorian Government will build many new schools built over the next decade, particularly in Melbourne's growth areas. Many of these areas can benefit from access to these new school grounds. Precinct structure plans guide the planning for new suburbs.⁶⁷ The precinct structure plan guidelines include principles for the provision and location of schools, including that they are designed and delivered to maximise opportunity for integration and shared use.⁶⁸

After the Victorian Government has approved a precinct structure plan and funding for new schools, the government conducts master planning for the school. At this stage, the Victorian Government can consult with local governments to help decide which school grounds should be designed for shared community use. Designing for shared community use from the beginning can help to avoid problems later. For example, schools can be designed to maximise outside hours community access to school grounds while closing off access to buildings and areas that are not going to be made available for shared community use. The master planning can also design for shared use to minimise noise and disruption to neighbouring residential properties.

‘Open gate’ benefits school and community

Views of a western suburbs assistant school principal

We have always had an open gate policy outside school hours at our school.

The value we see in having people in our school grounds after hours far outweighs locking people out, both from a safety perspective as well as looking after our school grounds.

Our facilities are well lit up at night, and that makes a big difference to people feeling safe on our grounds.

The message from our school council is ‘we want people to come use our space’. We think it’s better for our school to be looked after and used.

We ask our school community to look out for our school after hours and during school holidays, to call the police if they are ever worried. And this system works for us.

‘Community’ is one of the pillars of our school, and we have seen this internal focus be reflected in the external – the positive relationship with the community.

We strongly believe that this should be a place that the community can use. Our responsibility is to make the place available to them. We believe our enrolments have benefitted as a result.

We receive grant funding for different things across our school, including a sensory garden. We believe if we get grant funding like this, then the wider school community should be able to access the improved facilities.

We are very community minded here. For example, we have a new playground, which was funded partly by the school and partly through community fundraising. The facilities are used by families every day and on Sundays with market visitors. But we haven’t seen any damage because of this.

This informal use by the community is combined with more formal agreements with community groups, for example a farmers’ market is held on school grounds every Sunday morning. We see about 400 or so people use the grounds on Sundays alone.

That’s not to say there aren’t issues. While we have a maintenance person, they do not work every day, various other staff here may need to attend to things that might happen (such as, rubbish, graffiti, damage to facilities). For us, the benefits far outweigh not having our grounds open. Nothing has shown us that we should close our gates.

I came to this school 16 years ago. The school was buzzing after hours, there was yoga on, kids kicking the footy. Our grounds open to our community is a huge part of who we are in the community.



Shared school grounds can have challenges

Government school staff keep school grounds in good shape for the needs of their students. Sharing them can be an extra cost for schools, especially if community use increases the costs of maintenance, repairs and cleaning.⁶⁹ Our research has found that some schools might need more money to manage these costs if their school grounds are shared with the community.

Our research finds that sharing school grounds might benefit some locations over others.⁷⁰ For instance, sharing a small open space with few facilities might generate few benefits. Similarly, sharing a school ground where there are many options for outdoor recreation nearby might only deliver marginal benefits. Some schools might face specific challenges to sharing their grounds. For example, they might be located close to other facilities or commercial activities that generate a higher risk of anti-social behaviour. This means people might not feel as safe on school grounds out-of-hours, and school facilities might also be exposed to a higher risk of damage. For other schools, like specialist schools, their grounds may be designed specifically for their students' needs and are at higher risk of expensive damage from general community use.

Many schools have formal agreements with community groups to hire school facilities, such as indoor and outdoor courts, sports fields and school halls. These agreements usually specify the hours the facility can be used, insurance arrangements, and cleaning and maintenance responsibilities.

But schools cannot contract with the public to share responsibility for casual play in the school playgrounds, or informal use of sports fields or outdoor courts. Someone must manage any extra responsibilities, including the extra staff time and costs for cleaning, maintenance, or property repair. If these extra costs fall on the school's finite budget and staff resources, they can displace other school spending.

When school grounds are being actively used outside school hours, it can often make them safer and better supervised. This 'passive surveillance' can deter potential damage to school property. The Victorian Government's urban design guidelines highlight the importance of passive, informal surveillance as a form of security.⁷¹ Passive surveillance is achieved when people using a space can see and be seen by others.⁷² The Victorian Government's safer design guidelines notes that 'when there are 'eyes on the street' or 'natural surveillance' from passers-by, and if public places are overlooked from adjoining buildings, people feel safer and potential offenders feel exposed.'⁷³

'It doesn't matter what the weather is, families can come and gather and play. Often there is 20 plus families!'

'Research is strong – if there are people on sites it is a protective thing, both for the physical environment and for the families.'

School leaders, Carlton Primary School. Source: Source: VicHealth, '[Activating open spaces in schools for community use](#)', December 2023, pp 6-7.

In our research, we compared reported crime on school grounds in select areas. Crime Statistics Agency Victoria provided this data to Infrastructure Victoria as incidents on school grounds by locality. We assessed criminal damage reported to police at schools in locations where all government schools shared access outside school hours. We compared this with locations where no government schools offer community access.

We found places with shared school grounds are not statistically associated with higher levels of reported criminal damage to schools.⁷⁴ This conclusion is based on a comparative test of the average annual number of criminal damage incidents on school grounds reported to police between 2014 and 2023. This does not mean that making school grounds available to the public does not have higher costs. As previously mentioned, it will likely produce higher maintenance requirements from more intensive use.

Our analysis suggests that reported criminal damage levels vary widely between different places, but this is not necessarily related to whether the grounds were shared, or the socio-economic characteristics of the surrounding community. While there is likely some under-reporting of crime, this means that people should

not assume shared grounds necessarily attracts significantly higher levels of damage. Decision makers can make local site assessments to determine these risks such as examining the levels of criminal damage in the area, assessing any potential for additional risk from neighbouring activities and the design and condition of a specific school site.

Schools are often located in residential areas. Sometimes outside school hours use can mean that there is noise and disruption from the use of the school. This can create problems for neighbours.⁷⁵ School staff might spend additional time managing these issues with their neighbours and have limited ability to control how people behave on school grounds when staff are not present.

Many schools have sports fields, courts and playgrounds that are suitable for community use, but the school restricts others from using them. In many areas of Melbourne, sharing school grounds can make an immediate positive impact by increasing local access to outdoor recreational facilities. This can also contribute to improving public access to the local open space network.

But not all school grounds are immediately suitable for community use. The quality of their recreational facilities can affect the equity of access to places where people can play and exercise.⁷⁶ Our survey of people's views of social infrastructure found that women faced more barriers than men in accessing sports fields, such as poor lighting and feeling unsafe.⁷⁷ For some school grounds, an upgrade to the quality and condition of facilities can make them more appropriate for community use.

After-hours access doesn't work for all schools

Views of 2 western suburbs school principals

Our school was always previously open to the community. But we were the only one in the area that was open. One concern I had was that if we are the only school open, this funnels all the children and teenagers to our grounds.

We trialled closing our grounds for one term. Based off the number of incidents we were dealing with after hours, and the significant cost, we made the decision to close our school grounds after hours.

Because we were the only open school, there was a lot of clean up, graffiti, and general damage to play equipment on our grounds. We have a maintenance person, who only works one day a week. So, often it was the leadership team doing the cleaning up as part of yard duty.

We have multiple groups who we have formal joint use agreements with, we want them to feel safe on our grounds. Now that our grounds are closed after hours, these groups feel safer using our equipment. Safety is our number one reason for closing our grounds, and costs is number two.

For us to open our grounds to after-hours informal use, we would need this to be done in collaboration with other schools in the area. If we had consistent guidelines that principals can follow so we know we're doing the right thing, we think then it would be successful.

I would love to explore the option of partial open facilities, where some areas are publicly accessible and other areas are closed to balance access with safety and asset protection.

The concerns over damage and costs were echoed by another principal in the western suburbs growth corridor. This school is closed to the community for informal use.

We had to install larger fences around our school because we had a lot of vandalism on our grounds. We have some groups accessing our facilities, like cricket and soccer teams, but these are formal agreements. We are very community focused, having people onsite gives the school protection and gives the community organisations the facilities they need.

We are in a growth corridor, and this means there are new community facilities including ovals close by. These are council owned; however, we are able to access them during the school day when needed. It's a space for the community after hours.

The extra workload is a major issue, as is security. It takes time to repair any damage, we need our teachers on additional duties to check the grounds to make sure they are safe. For us, sharing our school grounds through licensed agreements with organisations means we know they will look after the facility.



Actions to support schools to share their grounds

Prioritise sites that deliver the most benefits

Recommendation 1: Prioritise which government school grounds could deliver the greatest benefits if they were shared with local communities outside school hours

Compile a list of specific school grounds that deliver the greatest benefits from sharing for informal community use outside school hours, especially in Melbourne's west, north and south-east. Places that deliver the greatest benefits are where:

- surrounding neighbourhoods have relatively little outdoor recreational facilities available for informal use
- school grounds have enough space and recreational facilities to meaningfully add to the informal recreational options in the area
- local community characteristics indicate large benefits from extra informal recreation, such as health risk factors and low participation in organised sport.

We recommend that the Victorian Government compile a priority list of existing school grounds that can deliver the greatest benefits for their surrounding communities if shared for informal use outside school hours. This includes assessing several factors including whether there are alternative outdoor recreational facilities nearby, how much extra capacity the facilities might meaningfully add, and the likelihood that sharing a particular school's grounds will yield health and community benefits.

Figure 4 shows our initial analysis using these factors to identify the areas where there are the greatest potential benefits from providing access outside school hours. Most strikingly, the places that yield the greatest potential benefits overlap significantly with areas where school grounds are more likely to be closed to the public.⁷⁸

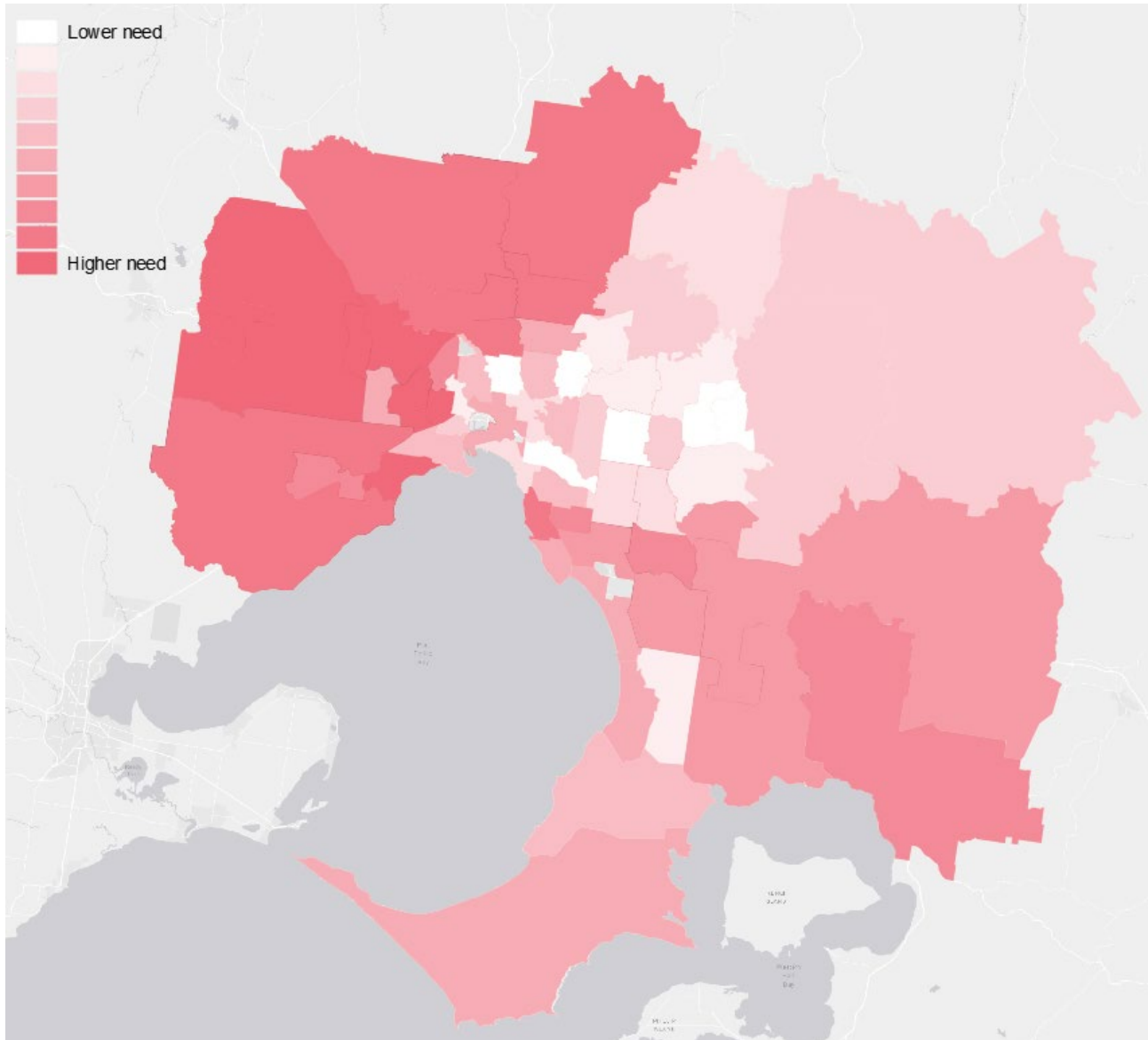
Government schools in Melbourne's eastern suburbs are currently more likely to share their school grounds outside school hours. Schools in Melbourne's north, west, and southeast are currently more likely to restrict community access.⁷⁹ Prioritising schools to share their grounds can also increase equity of public access to open space. Shared school grounds are not the only way to provide this access, but any extra access helps contribute to the open space needs of a more compact and growing city.

Access to open space can provide opportunities for people to connect with their community for informal recreation. By carefully assessing the potential benefits created by shared school grounds, any necessary extra funding can be directed to the places that can maximise community benefits.

Our work provides the Victorian Government with a good starting point. We have identified potential areas for further investigation and possible government action. But we have not assessed individual schools. Certain schools might have unique factors that prevent them from sharing their grounds or might involve more overall costs than benefits to do so. We also have not yet had an opportunity to gauge the appetite of the school community nor the willingness of local governments to help encourage beneficial use of shared school grounds. The Victorian Government can directly consult with potential schools and local governments to see whether their grounds are suitable and acceptable.

Figure 4 shows an index of the areas that would have the most benefit of improved access to school grounds for out-of-hours use. It shows the value of a composite index that measures whether the areas have people who do less exercise, do not speak English at home and cannot access a sports field (not on school grounds) within a 10-minute walk. The darker the shading, the greater the relative benefit compared to the other places within the index.

Figure 4: Areas where providing out of school hours access to school grounds would offer the greatest benefit



Source: Infrastructure Victoria analysis of government data; PHIDU, 'Estimated population, aged 18 years and over, who did low, very low or no exercise in the previous week (modelled estimates)', Torrens University Australia, 2024; Infrastructure Victoria analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics people who do not speak English at home, [2021 census](#), 2022; Infrastructure Victoria analysis of access to sports fields within 10-minute walk time, unpublished, 2024.

Fund a voluntary program to support schools to share their grounds

Recommendation 2: Give these schools extra help for maintenance if they voluntarily share their grounds outside school hours

Provide additional government funding to the Department of Education to help schools manage extra maintenance and other costs if school grounds are voluntarily shared outside school hours.

Once priority schools have been identified, the Victorian Government should work to identify the remaining barriers to school grounds being used by the community outside of school hours. This can include updating existing policies relating to support for maintenance costs, such as for damage and vandalism. These updates should focus on how to make it easier for schools in priority areas to maintain facilities that are shared with the local community.

Government school maintenance funding should be allocated in a way to ensure that priority schools that experience more incidents of vandalism are not disadvantaged. One way of doing this could be to follow the vandalism funding model in operation in New Zealand (see case study).

‘Sharing our facilities and keeping the grounds open creates the sense of hub...not just for kids. If we’re seen to be helping adults too, we’re creating a sense of connectedness and enhancing the reputation of the college...’

‘The reputation of our school has been enhanced through giving local community groups and members access to our school. We are seen as community supporters and that is a good thing for our school.’

Facilities manager, Ringwood Secondary College. Source: VicHealth, ‘[Activating open spaces in schools for community use](#)’, December 2023, p 21.

Vandalism funding for schools in New Zealand

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has a funding system to help schools repair their facilities if they have been vandalised. This funding assists schools for incidents that cost below \$2,500 and are outside regular insurance, operational and maintenance funding.⁸⁰

Funding allocations calculated by area risks

How much funding is available to schools is dependent on several factors. Schools in New Zealand are rated by 5 vandalism risk categories. These categories determine the funding available from government. This funding is then offered at a per student rate.⁸¹

Government funding is restricted to a midway point, meaning that schools may be required to cover a small gap from its regular maintenance funds. If vandalism costs exceed a risk category's limit, the school can then apply for top up funding. The risk category limit is calculated as the per student funding rate by the total number of students. For example, a 500-student school, categorised as high risk (\$21.57/student) the limit would be \$10,785/year. Any vandalism expenses above this limit would require the school to apply for top up funding.

Vandalism risk categories are reviewed if schools experience a rise in vandalism incidents or if a school exceeds its funding allowance for 3 consecutive years.⁸²

Risk category	Historic vandalism costs per student	Funding rate provided by government per student
Low risk	\$0 to \$7.50	\$4.31
Medium risk	\$7.51 to \$13.97	\$12.93
High risk	\$14.98 to \$22.54	\$21.57
Critical risk	\$22.55 to \$29.91	\$30.16
Extreme risk	\$29.92 to \$30.02	\$34.47

Source: Ministry of Education, '[Vandalism funding to repair school property](#)', New Zealand Government 14 May 2024, accessed 10 July 2024.



Upgrade select school facilities to be suitable for shared use

Recommendation 3: Offer funding for upgrades to incentivise shared access outside school hours

Offer schools and local councils infrastructure grants for joint partnerships that deliver better shared outdoor recreational facilities in priority areas. Grants should be conditional on these facilities being available for the educational needs of school students and permit informal use by the community outside school hours. Require both partners to reach mutual agreement on any extra maintenance, cleaning and other responsibilities generated by use outside school hours.

Some existing school grounds are already at a suitable standard for shared use. Others are not. Where neither the school nor local council can pay the cost of upgrading their facilities within their existing budgets, we recommend that the Victorian Government provide extra funding for upgrades. Upgrades should get these recreational facilities to a standard that would perform more like a quality community recreational facility in areas where there are few alternatives. This would be a cheaper and better use of existing government land than buying extra land to meet the community's open space needs.

The cost of upgrading school infrastructure to be suitable for shared use should be compared to the alternative ways to achieve similar access to public open space. We have estimated that upgrading sports fields, with improved lighting, fencing and toilet facilities, for 20 priority areas might cost up to \$40 million.⁸³ This would be significantly cheaper than buying extra land for these facilities. It would come at an equivalent cost to Victoria's current program to deliver 29 pocket parks while providing significantly more recreational space.⁸⁴

The Victorian Government should establish a fund that would provide up to \$2 million in funding per site to upgrade a school's grounds to a standard for shared use. These upgrades could include toilet facilities, sport field upgrades, improved lighting or other community infrastructure, like seating and benches.

Grants from the fund can be made to partnerships between local councils and individual schools. This gives local councils an opportunity to provide, at no or low capital cost, more outdoor recreational facilities for their communities, in accordance with their community needs and open space policies.

School grounds that are upgraded for shared use are likely to need extra maintenance. School and council partnership infrastructure grants for upgrades should be contingent on mutual agreement about responsibilities for maintenance, insurance and cleaning. Stakeholders have emphasised that schools need guaranteed, long-term support from government and councils to ensure that schools are not left with all the costs of maintaining and cleaning assets that are for the benefit of the wider community.

Endnotes

- ¹ Department of Transport and Planning, '[Victoria in future 2023: Population and household projections to 2051](#)', November 2023.
- ² Department of Transport and Planning, '[Statewide draft housing targets](#)', Engage Victoria website, n.d., accessed 11 August 2024.
- ³ Department of Transport and Planning, '[Revaluation 2024 outcomes](#)', Land Use Victoria website, 31 July 2024, accessed 11 August 2024. Estimate generated from past property valuation statistics 2014-2024.
- ⁴ RPS, 'Community engagement: density done well', Infrastructure Victoria, February 2020.
- ⁵ Infrastructure Victoria, '[Choosing Victoria's future: Five urban development scenarios](#)', October 2023.
- ⁶ B Giles-Corti, T Saghapour, G Turrell, L Gunn, A Both, M Lowe, J Rozek, R Roberts, P Hooper, A Butt and C Higgs, 'Spatial and socioeconomic inequalities in liability in Australia's 21 largest cities: Does city size matter?', *Health & Place*, 2022, 78:102899.
- ⁷ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, '[Open space for everyone: Open space strategy for metropolitan Melbourne 2021](#)', 2021
- ⁸ Department of Health, '[Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023-2027](#)', 2023, pp 28-29; Department of Education and Training, '[Victorian child health and wellbeing survey 2021: Summary report](#)', 2021, p 6.
- ⁹ VicHealth, '[Sport participation in Victoria 2015-2022: Research summary](#)', 2024, p 11.
- ¹⁰ Australian Sports Commission, '[Culturally and linguistically diverse audiences \(CALD\): Market segmentation for sport participation](#)', Clearinghouse for Sport website, April 2013; Fiftyfive5, '[World Children's Day 2022: Fiftyfive5's top insights for UNICEF](#)', UNICEF Australia, October 2022, pp 17-23; R Jeanes, D Penney, J O'Connor, R Spaaij, J Magee, E O'Hara and L Lymbery, '[Informal sport as a health and social resource for diverse young people](#)', Monash University, 2021; R Spaaij, J Magee, R Jeanes, D Penney and J O'Connor, 'Informal sport and (non)belonging among Hazara migrants in Australia', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2023, 49(17):4352-4371; V Cruickshank, B Hyndman and T Hartley, '[No cash, no play? Have cost-of-living pressures impacted sports participation in Australia?](#)', *Conversation*, 10 April 2024; Australian Sports Commission, Table 8, 'Sport or non-sport related participation (adults)', *AusPlay survey results July 2022-June 2023: Victoria* (dataset), 31 October 2023, accessed 5 September 2024.
- ¹¹ P Edwards and AD Tsouros, '[A healthy city is an active city: A physical activity planning guide](#)', World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, 2008.
- ¹² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, '[Built environment and health](#)', AIHW website, 7 July 2022, accessed 24 June 2024.
- ¹³ Quantum Market Research, '[Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024.
- ¹⁴ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, '[Open space for everyone: Open space strategy for metropolitan Melbourne 2021](#)', 2021, p 22.
- ¹⁵ The Centre for International Economics, '[Cost of land for different regions in Victoria: Key findings and methodology](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, 18 June 2024, pp 2-3.
- ¹⁶ Municipal Association of Victoria, '[Sport & recreation](#)', VicCouncils website, n.d., accessed 11 August 2024.
- ¹⁷ Victorian School Building Authority, '[About us](#)', VSBA website, 15 July 2024, accessed 11 August 2024.
- ¹⁸ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.
- ¹⁹ Department of Transport and Planning, '[Victoria in future 2023: Population and household projections to 2051](#)', November 2023.
- ²⁰ Department of Transport and Planning, '[Victoria in future 2023: Population and household projections to 2051](#)', November 2023.
- ²¹ Department of Transport and Planning, '[Victoria in future 2023: Population and household projections to 2051](#)', November 2023.
- ²² Department of Transport and Planning, '[Victoria in future 2023: Population and household projections to 2051](#)', November 2023.
- ²³ Department of Transport and Planning, '[Statewide draft housing targets](#)', Engage Victoria website, n.d., accessed 11 August 2024.
- ²⁴ RPS, 'Community engagement: density done well', Infrastructure Victoria, February 2020.
- ²⁵ Quantum Market Research, '[Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024.
- ²⁶ Arup, '[Social infrastructure mapping: Outdoor sports fields](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 5.
- ²⁷ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, '[Open space for everyone: Open space strategy for metropolitan Melbourne 2021](#)', 2021, p 20.
- ²⁸ Infrastructure Victorian analysis of data provided by the Centre for International Economics, '[Economic, social, and environmental impacts of alternative urban development scenarios for Victoria](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, September 2023
- ²⁹ Department of Transport and Planning, '[Revaluation 2024 outcomes](#)', Land Use Victoria website, 31 July 2024, accessed 11 August 2024. Estimate generated from past property valuation statistics 2014-2024.

- ³⁰ Infrastructure Victorian analysis of data provided by the Centre for International Economics, '[Economic, social, and environmental impacts of alternative urban development scenarios for Victoria](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, September 2023.
- ³¹ Infrastructure Victoria, '[Choosing Victoria's future: Five urban development scenarios](#)', October 2023.
- ³² B Giles-Corti, T Saghapour, G Turrell, L Gunn, A Both, M Lowe, J Rozek, R Roberts, P Hooper, A Butt and C Higgs, 'Spatial and socioeconomic inequalities in liability in Australia's 21 largest cities: Does city size matter?', *Health & Place*, 2022, 78:102899.
- ³³ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, '[Open space for everyone: Open space strategy for metropolitan Melbourne 2021](#)', 2021, p 20.
- ³⁴ Department of Health and AUSactive, '[The dangers of sitting: why sitting is the new smoking](#)', BetterHealth Channel website, 4 July 2022, accessed 24 June 2024; Department of Health, '[Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023-2027](#)', 2023, p 28; World Health Organisation, '[Physical activity](#)', WHO website, 26 June 2024, accessed 17 July 2024.
- ³⁵ Department of Health, '[Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2023-2027](#)', 2023, pp 28-29; Department of Education and Training, '[Victorian child health and wellbeing survey 2021: Summary report](#)', 2021, p 6.
- ³⁶ Department of Health and Aged Care, '[Physical activity and exercise guidelines for all Australians: for adults \(18 to 64 years\)](#)', Australian Government, DHAC website, 10 May 2021, accessed 24 June 2024; Department of Health and Aged Care, '[Physical activity and exercise guidelines for all Australians: for children and young people \(5 to 17 years\)](#)', Australian Government, DHAC website, 6 May 2021, accessed 24 June 2024; World Health Organisation, '[WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour](#)', 2020, pp 25-28, 32-37.
- ³⁷ Department of Health and AUSactive, '[The dangers of sitting: why sitting is the new smoking](#)', BetterHealth Channel website, 4 July 2022, accessed 24 June 2024.
- ³⁸ Department of Jobs, Regions and Precincts, '[Active Victoria 2022-2026: A strategic framework for sport and active recreation](#)', July 2022; World Health Organisation, '[WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour](#)', 2020.
- ³⁹ VicHealth, '[Sport participation in Victoria 2015-2022: Research summary](#)', 2024.
- ⁴⁰ VicHealth, '[Sport participation in Victoria 2015-2022: Research summary](#)', 2024, p 11.
- ⁴¹ VicHealth, '[Sport participation in Victoria 2015-2022: Research summary](#)', 2024.
- ⁴² Australian Sports Commission, Table 8, 'Sport or non-sport related participation (adults)', *AusPlay survey results July 2022-June 2023: Victoria* (dataset), 31 October 2023, accessed 5 September 2024.
- ⁴³ Australian Sports Commission, '[Culturally and linguistically diverse audiences \(CALD\): Market segmentation for sport participation](#)', Clearinghouse for Sport website, April 2013; Fiftyfive5, '[World Children's Day 2022: Fiftyfive5's top insights for UNICEF](#)', UNICEF Australia, October 2022, pp 17-23; R Jeanes, D Penney, J O'Connor, R Spaaij, J Magee, E O'Hara and L Lymbery, '[Informal sport as a health and social resource for diverse young people](#)', Monash University, 2021; R Spaaij, J Magee, R Jeanes, D Penney and J O'Connor, 'Informal sport and (non)belonging among Hazara migrants in Australia', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2023, 49(17):4352-4371; V Cruickshank, B Hyndman and T Hartley, '[No cash, no play? Have cost-of-living pressures impacted sports participation in Australia?](#)', *Conversation*, 10 April 2024.
- ⁴⁴ P Edwards and AD Tsouros, '[A healthy city is an active city: A physical activity planning guide](#)', World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, 2008.
- ⁴⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, '[Built environment and health](#)', AIHW website, 7 July 2022, accessed 24 June 2024.
- ⁴⁶ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, '[Open space for everyone: Open space strategy for metropolitan Melbourne 2021](#)', 2021, p 22.
- ⁴⁷ Quantum Market Research, '[Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024.
- ⁴⁸ Quantum Market Research, '[Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 92.
- ⁴⁹ Quantum Market Research, '[Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 106.
- ⁵⁰ Quantum Market Research, '[Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, pp 103, 106.
- ⁵¹ Quantum Market Research, '[Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities](#)', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 107.
- ⁵² Infrastructure Victoria analysis based on: City of Melbourne, '[Open space strategy: Planning for future growth](#)', 2012; City of Yarra, '[Yarra open space strategy 2020](#)', 2020; City of Glen Eira, '[Open space strategy refresh 2020](#)', 2020; City of Boroondara, '[Open space strategy](#)', 2013; City of Stonnington, '[Strategies for creating open space](#)', 2013; City of Port Phillip, '[Places for people: Public space strategy 2022-32](#)', vol. 2, 2022; City of Bayside, '[Bayside open space strategy](#)', 2012; City of Merri-bek, '[Merri-bek open space strategy](#)', 2024; City of Brimbank, '[Creating better parks: Open space and playground policy and plan](#)', 2016; City of Maribyrnong, '[Open space strategy](#)', 2014; City of Moonee Valley, '[Moonee Valley draft open space strategy 2023-2033](#)', 2023; City of Hobsons Bay, '[Hobsons Bay open space strategy 2018-28](#)', 2018; City of Wyndham, '[Open space strategy 2045](#)', 2016; City of Home, '[Open space strategy](#)', draft, 2024; City of Whittlesea, '[Open space strategy](#)', 2016; City of Casey, '[Open space strategy](#)', ver. 2, 2023; City of Greater Dandenong, '[Greater Dandenong open space strategy 2020-2030](#)', 2020; City of Whitehorse, '[Whitehorse open space strategy](#)', 2007; City of Kingston, '[2023-2033 open space strategy](#)', 2023; City of Darebin, '[Breathing space: The Darebin open space strategy](#)', 2019; City of Monash, '[Monash open space strategy](#)', 2021; City of Melton, '[Open space plan 2016-2026](#)', 2016; City of Knox, '[Knox open space plan 2012-2022](#)', 2012; City of Maroondah, '[Open](#)

space strategy 2016: Connecting people and spaces', 2016; City of Banyule, 'Public open space plan 2016-2031', 2016; City of Manningham, 'Open space strategy 2013', 2013; City of Frankston, 'Frankston City open space strategy 2016-2036', 2016; Mornington Peninsula Shire, 'Open space strategy', 2003; Nillumbik Shire, 'Open space strategy', 2005; Yarra Ranges Shire, 'Recreation and open space strategy 2013-2023', 2013; Cardinia Shire, 'Draft open space strategy', 2022.

⁵³ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁵⁴ Quantum Market Research, 'Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 100.

⁵⁵ Department of Education, 'Community use of schools - hiring and licensing', DE website, 28 November 2023, accessed 5 August 2024.

⁵⁶ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁵⁷ Arup, 'Social infrastructure mapping: Outdoor sports fields', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 11.

⁵⁸ The Centre for International Economics, 'Cost of land for different regions in Victoria: Key findings and methodology', Infrastructure Victoria, 18 June 2024, pp 2-3.

⁵⁹ The Centre for International Economics, 'Cost of land for different regions in Victoria: Key findings and methodology', Infrastructure Victoria, 18 June 2024, pp 2-3.

⁶⁰ Data provided by The Centre for International Economics for 'Cost of land for different regions in Victoria: Key findings and methodology', Infrastructure Victoria, 18 June 2024.

⁶¹ Arup, 'Social infrastructure mapping: Outdoor sports fields', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 11.

⁶² Arup, 'Social infrastructure mapping: Outdoor sports fields', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 11.

⁶³ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁶⁴ J Boys and A Jeffery, 'Valuing urban schools as social infrastructure', in B Cleaveland, S Backhouse, P Chandler, I McShane, JM Clinton and C Newton (eds), *Schools as community hubs: Building "More than a School" for community benefits*, Springer, Singapore, 2023, p 113.

⁶⁵ J Boys and A Jeffery, 'Valuing urban schools as social infrastructure', in B Cleaveland, S Backhouse, P Chandler, I McShane, JM Clinton and C Newton (eds), *Schools as community hubs: Building "More than a School" for community benefits*, Springer, Singapore, 2023, p 113.

⁶⁶ J Boys and A Jeffery, 'Valuing urban schools as social infrastructure', in B Cleaveland, S Backhouse, P Chandler, I McShane, JM Clinton and C Newton (eds), *Schools as community hubs: Building "More than a School" for community benefits*, Springer, Singapore, 2023, p 113; VicHealth, 'Opening the gate: A resource to support Victorian schools to activate school grounds and open spaces for community use', December 2023, p 3.

⁶⁷ Victorian Planning Authority, 'Precinct structure planning guidelines: New communities in Victoria', 2021.

⁶⁸ Victorian Planning Authority, 'Precinct structure planning guidelines: New communities in Victoria', 2021, p 85.

⁶⁹ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁷⁰ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁷¹ Department of Transport and Planning, 'Urban design guidelines for Victoria: 3.3 Local parks', Planning website, 9 June 2023, accessed 21 August 2024.

⁷² NSW Police, 'Safer by Design', NSW Police website, n.d., accessed 21 August 2024.

⁷³ Department of Sustainability and Environment and Crime Prevention Victoria, 'Safer design guidelines for Victoria', 2005.

⁷⁴ Crime Statistics Agency, 'Offences recorded at schools for select offence types, 2014 – 2023', extracted from LEAP on 18 January 2024.

⁷⁵ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁷⁶ Quantum Market Research, 'Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, pp 96-97, 105-106.

⁷⁷ Quantum Market Research, 'Access to social infrastructure consumer research – outdoor sports facilities', Infrastructure Victoria, April 2024, p 96.

⁷⁸ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁷⁹ Infrastructure Victoria analysis of internal government data.

⁸⁰ Ministry of Education, 'Vandalism funding to repair school property', New Zealand Government, Ministry of Education website, 14 May 2024, accessed 10 July 2024.

⁸¹ Ministry of Education, 'Vandalism funding to repair school property', New Zealand Government, Ministry of Education website, 14 May 2024, accessed 10 July 2024.

⁸² Ministry of Education, 'Vandalism funding to repair school property', New Zealand Government, Ministry of Education website, 14 May 2024, accessed 10 July 2024.

⁸³ Infrastructure Victoria analysis based on data from Sports and Recreation Victoria, unpublished.

⁸⁴ Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 'Pocket parks', Explore Outdoors website, 13 June 2024, accessed 10 July 2024.

Sustainability note

Infrastructure Victoria is committed to reducing its impact on the environment. This report is available in accessible version online or in PDF format only.

This publication may be of assistance to you, but Infrastructure Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence that may arise from you relying on any information in this publication. You should seek appropriately qualified advice before making any decisions regarding your particular project.

Published by Infrastructure Victoria
October 2024

© Copyright Infrastructure Victoria 2024

Except for any logos, emblems, trademarks, figures and photography, this document is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia licence. It is a condition of this Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 licence that you must give credit to the original author, who is Infrastructure Victoria.

This document is also available in PDF and accessible HTML or Word format at www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au

ISBN 978-1-925632-98-9
(PDF/online/MS word)

