

Soft and Green Assets: Implementing the IPWEA practice Notes

Paul Handcock and Janine Ahola

¹ *City of Melville, Western Australia, Asset Management Coordinator*

² *City of Melville, Western Australia, landscape Architect Coordinator*

Abstract: *The City of Melville has spent the last two years wrestling with the application of the IPWEA Park Practice Notes to its green and soft assets. This is our journey with some notes for whoever ventures down this path.*

KEYWORDS: IPWEA, Practice Notes, Park Asset Management, Personal Stories

1 Introduction

The Process of implementing the IPWEA guidelines on Park Management was born out of frustration, at not having park assets – like benches, bollards, signs, trees, grass, garden, beds, mulch – considered as real things, and being deprioritised under civil assets like footpath, and roads. There was no interest or recognition of the financial value of these items – so when renewal works were required no funds could or would be allocated to these projects.

The IPWEA process provided “The Way” to enable these assets to be considered, by standardising the way it was talked about in line with the hard asset classes. In 2017, after attending one of IPWEAs works shops we commenced and simplified the process to 4 main steps – find out what we have and where, work out what we would like to have, what is the gap between these two and get the plan adopted.

2 Where is everything?

The first thing was to discover what we had, so we started a data collection process. This surprised quite a few people, as it didn't just include the 203 named parks, but actually there's is an additional 400 spaces which comprise of another 30% land area of public open space is managed and maintained.

It also discovered that these spaces have over 125,000 hard assets, like seat, tables, bollards, signs and playgrounds to a current conservatively valued at \$41 million replacement cost – none of which was included in any asset management long term planning process.

The data collection for soft assets is ongoing, getting refined with more detail - but to date we have counted 35,000 street trees, approximately 8.2 hectares of greens space which has a conservative value of \$184 million. See Appendix 1.

Some of the interesting points at this stage include:

- The discussions with our finance department to get the amount included in the long term financial plan.
- Commencement of a discussion on the \$/ha spent on maintenance which now includes the total area, rather than just the named parks!
- Picking up of park data is not as straight forward as roads, being not a linear space and missing objects was not unknown.

3 Is this what we want it to be?

To assist in this discussion first we analysed the hierarchy and function of the space. We used the adopted WA department of sport and recreations naming for the hierarchy – regional, District, neighbourhood, and local – which also links directly to our planning scheme.

We also assigned a functional category, modified the IPWEA categories, to fit our understanding – sport, recreation, landscape, natural area, foreshore, civic surrounds, stormwater, and special purpose.

The discussion on how to split and name the land, so that all levels of the organisation could utilise and understand it was robust and continual. As every time we thought we had finished, we thought of another space – like non-publically accessible sumps or golf course

that didn't quite the ones we had. This has created a greater understanding of these spaces and what they actually are!!

Combining these two to provide a guideline for what we would expect to find at each level of each type of space. Ranging from level 5 (low level of asset and standard) through to level 1 (the premier spaces with everything at a very good standard indeed). See Appendix 2.

4 Now for the Analysis

All this work above has provided the framework to commence an objective analysis of the City of Melville public open space.

Previous desk top analysis had indicated that we have enough green space – with everyone able to access something within 400m, but by dividing it up we can now analyse the spread of types of space and hierarchy of space. This time the desk top exercise has shown that across the suburbs we the spread of the hierarchy of the parks is not ideal and work will need to be undertaken to increase and decrease the hierarchy to even out the availability equally to everyone. **Appendix 3**

4.1 The adopted plans – to come

All of which leads to a way to align staff, residents, and elected members conversations with regards to expectations regards to levels of service provided on/to each space.

It provides a guideline for the Long term financial plan in terms of when a public opens space should be looked at for renewal – for example a level 1 space may be renewed as it no longer is fit for purpose after just 15 years, whilst a level 5 space may have to wait 50 years for renewal consideration.

It also a guideline for responding to requests for assets on a space and justification for removing assets from a space to enable the city to sustainably manage all its assets, including the outdoor ones.

Eventually it will be adopted and embedded as the public open space asset management strategy.

But until then it has still bought the true and respected value of all public open space assets into the light with them now being included as a line item in the long term financial plan. As the data and understanding is refined, so will this figure.

4.2 The journey itself?

This process is by no means finished, even after 2 years!!

The Key lessons learned have been:

- It takes time, not only the documenting but in the thinking, the explaining, the discussion, and the do-overs as your thinking grows.
- You will not get it the first time, patience, patience, patience is required to bring on-board/ expand/change everyone's thinking and understanding
- Keeping the momentum, regular meetings, to keep the thinking going and documenting the thoughts so that everyone can learn together the new way of talking about assets.
- Support from the Boss, the time it takes, but also to understand and acknowledge the new way of thinking. Get them to understand so they can discuss it to the rest of the organisation
- Respect across all levels and work places – asset, management, design, maintenance, planning. Acknowledging and working with different thinkers to express their process/ practices/ beliefs to embed them into this guideline
- Above all you need a champion or two, people who grasp the concept, grasp the ultimate outcome and are willing to go over and over and over it, in as many different ways as required to bring the rest of the team along.

APPENDIX 1 - An Example of the park data collected shown on the City's Intranet

This map shows the assets collected as icons – benches, irrigation, bollards, stormwater etc.

The colours highlight the different functionally categories identified with the space

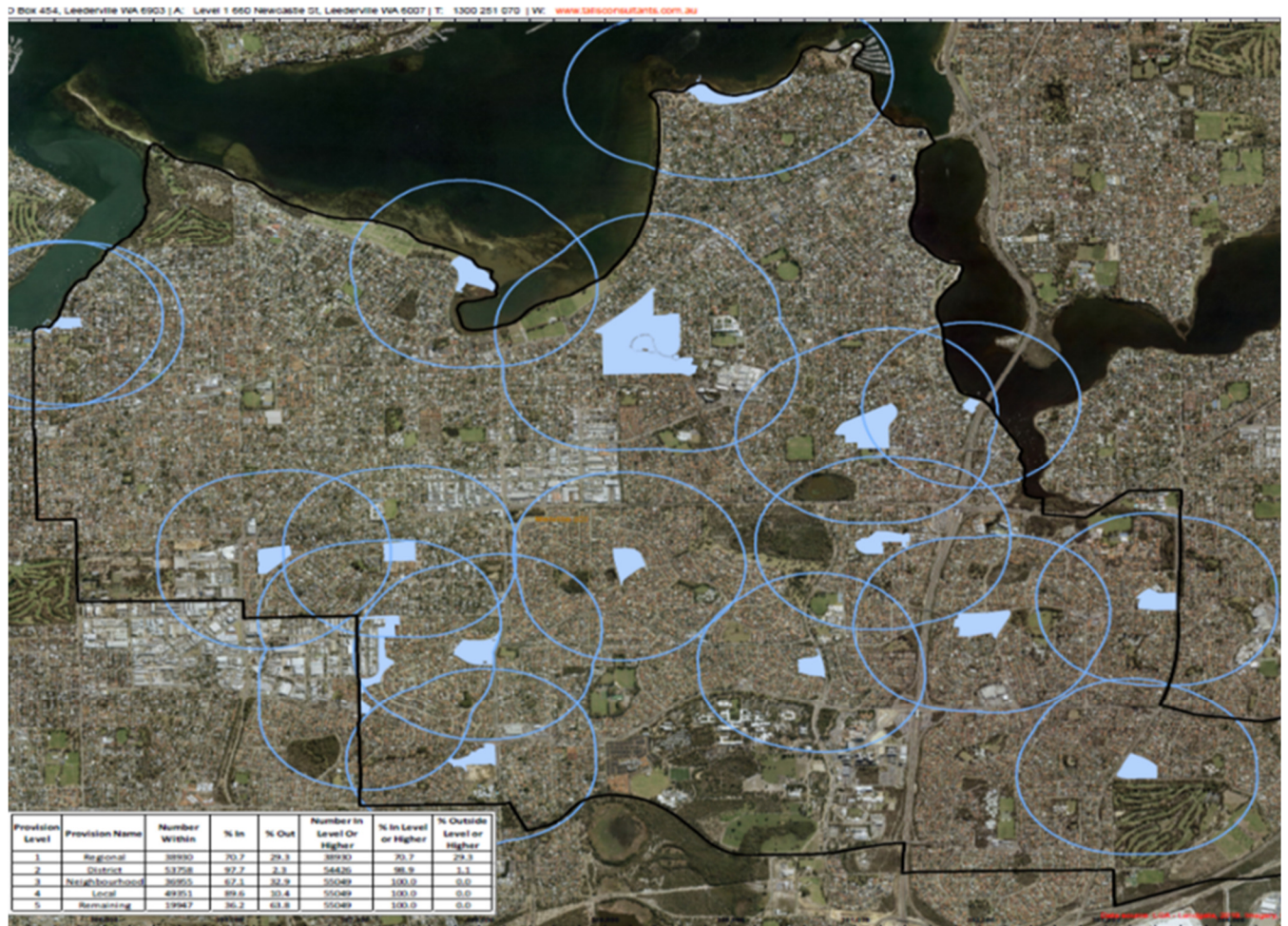


APPENDIX 2 - An Example of the asset provision guidelines ranging from level 5 (low) to 1

This guide line is for some of the assets identified within the streetscape functionality space. There are more asset groups and each one has different requirements within the different spaces.

STREETSCAPE ASSET PROVISION LEVEL					
Hierarchy	5	4	3	2	1
Irrigation	No water allocation	Temporary irrigation only to feature or new plantings. No permanent water allocation.	Low water allocation	Medium water allocation	High water allocation
Turf	partial coverage over cooler/wetter months only	partial coverage over cooler/wetter months only	full coverage over cooler/wetter months only	partial coverage all year round	Full turf coverage all year round
Planting	No garden Beds	Low amenity garden Beds	Medium amenity garden Beds	Medium amenity garden Beds	High amenity garden Beds
Tree Canopy coverage	Planned amenity planting for function and form	Planned amenity planting for function and form	Planned amenity planting for function and form	Planned amenity planting for function and form	Planned amenity planting for function and form
Signage	regulatory signage as required	regulatory signage as required	regulatory signage only as required	Minimal Entry and regulatory signage as required	Minimal Entry, Interpretative/informative/way finding or regulatory as required
Stormwater Management	Per Park/Engineering Stormwater Management guidelines	Per Park/Engineering Stormwater Management guidelines	Per Natural Area Stormwater Management plan	Per Natural Area Stormwater Management plan	Per Natural Area Stormwater Management plan

APPENDIX 3 - An Example of the inequality of the hierarchy spread across the City



The circles indicate an 800m radius around public open space that has been identified as 'Neighbourhood spaces'