

**Report on the application of
Best Value principles at**



PARK MAINTENANCE SERVICES

OCTOBER 2002

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Best Value Legislation passed by the State Government in December 1999 replaced the Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) legislation that applied to municipal councils in Victoria. Under CCT legislation, the City of Glen Eira was required to competitively tender 50% of its annual expenditure on goods and services to demonstrate it was meeting market based efficiency and productivity performance standards. However, under Best Value Victoria, the emphasis is on developing more sophisticated systems and benchmarks to demonstrate that services provided by Council are meeting community needs. Under the City of Glen Eira Community Plan 2001-2004, there are a number of additional principles that are predicated on ensuring all council activities are transparent and accountable to ratepayers. This approach requires Council to act amongst other things,

- to make decisions in an open and transparent way to ensure the community receives the best value in service and delivery;
- to ensure the community receives the best possible value in service and delivery according to community needs, priorities, access and affordability;
- to ensure the Council remains financially responsible, accountable and sustainable and
- to provide superior and innovative services measured against recognised benchmarks

1.2 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to establish a framework for the City of Glen Eira to establish best value practices for its Park Maintenance services based on the principles outlined in section 1.3. This report also outlines recommendations to further improve the services currently offered.

1.3 The Best Value Principles

Best Value is focused on meeting the needs of the local community, and applies to all Council services, whether provided in-house or contracted.

Best Value is based on six principles. In brief, the six best value principles are as follows:

- All services provided by Council must meet quality and cost standards
- All services provided by the Council must be responsive to the needs of the community
- Each service provided by the Council must be accessible to those members of the community for whom the service is intended

- Council must achieve continuous improvement in the provision of services for its community
- Council must develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provided
- Council must report regularly to its community on its achievements in relation to the other five principles

1.4 Service Context

History of Park Maintenance

During the period between the Federation and World War 1, the first real 'garden parks' were developed within Glen Eira.

The growth of the population and the improvement of working conditions in 1909 [allowing free time on Saturday afternoons] led to massive demands on the parks and recreational areas.

By 1914, six gardeners were maintaining the parks within the Caulfield region alone of Glen Eira. As parklands continued to be developed and the facilities and standards increased, so too did the resources that were required to manage them.

Traditionally, Council has retained a substantial workforce to undertake park maintenance. Under the auspices of CCT in October 1996, the delivery of Park Maintenance services was subjected to competition through an open tendering process. The result was retention of all park maintenance services in-house including street tree maintenance, along with the renaming of the business unit to "Park Services".

Legislative Mandate

The Local Government Act of 1989 vests Council with the responsibility to provide facilities and services for sport, recreation and leisure, and parks, gardens and reserves.

Need

The City of Glen Eira has a horticultural infrastructure envied by many metropolitan municipalities, with historic avenues of trees, a substantial proportion of beautiful open parkland, and local sporting facilities to rival the best municipal facilities in Australia.

Glen Eira's Community Plan outlines its commitment to enhancing the quality of life in Glen Eira by the provision of adequate and accessible open space for all, and ensuring community park assets are appropriately managed and maintained.

Service Description

Park maintenance services are co-ordinated and delivered by the Park Services Unit, Infrastructure Division, and include maintenance of the City's street trees.

Corporate Objectives

The City of Glen Eira Community Plan 2001-2004 provides the framework for work undertaken by Council, on behalf of the community.

The Community Plan outlines the community directions selected by Council to ensure the Communities aspirations are met.

Two of the key directions taken by Council are ensuring adequate and accessible open space for all, and continuing to maintain and manage community assets, by continued upgrade to Glen Eira's parks and facilities.

Service Objectives

Council's Park Maintenance Service objectives include the following:

- Responsiveness to the changing community needs is demonstrated through all services and programs delivered.
- To ensure that parks, gardens and reserves are maintained in a manner that affords the highest practicable level of safety to park users.
- Development of strong relationships between the community /community groups and the Park Services Unit and its staff.
- Maintenance of the physical assets of the parks, gardens and reserves so as to create the environment in which people are able to pursue their recreational and sporting interests
- A presence in the community for the purposes of both information provision and security
- The capacity to work co-operatively in the provision of information about issues that arise within the community, and other Council service areas, resulting in the smooth functioning of the community.

Current Service Standards

The current management and maintenance of Council's open space and street trees is undertaken in accordance with Council's specifications.

Service Description

Park Services is the in-house provider for the maintenance of Council's open space and street trees and includes the maintenance of the following:

- Sportsgrounds
- Playgrounds
- Park Infrastructure [including seats, tables, barbecues, signage, shelters, pathways, fences, park lighting, drink fountains etc]
- Litter control [general]
- Turf areas
- Irrigation
- Horticultural maintenance of carparks and traffic treatments
- Annual and perennial garden beds
- Weed and pest control
- Turf, concrete and synthetic cricket wickets
- Waterbodies
- Public Toilets
- Arboricultural maintenance of street and park trees

Park Services also provides the following technical advice and support:

- Provision of technical advice and support to Council departments, on horticultural / arboricultural related capital and future maintenance works
- Provision of technical advice to assist with the formulation of Council policies and procedures
- Annual preparation of Council's Vegetation Management Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Office of the Chief Electrical Inspector.
- Immediate response with assistance and support in the event of a Municipal Emergency.
- Response to queries related to horticulture / arboriculture issues from:
 - External – Residents, utility companies, park users, sporting clubs

- Internal – Recreation, Asset Management, Local laws, Town Planning, Building, Traffic Engineers, GlenWorks, Risk Management and Customer Service Centre

Major Activities / Activity Levels

AREA	ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY LEVEL
Sportsgrounds 52 Grounds	▪ Mowing	Grounds cut 1-2 times per week. season conditions dictate number of cuts, but turf height is kept between 30 - 50mm
	▪ Renovation	Grounds top-dressed, seeded twice per year Aerated 4 times per year Fertilised 3 times per year
	▪ Weed and pest control	Controlled seasonally
	▪ Irrigation	Computerised and radio controlled system, requiring specialist knowledge
	▪ Cricket wickets	Preparing turf wickets Covering / uncovering synthetic and concrete wickets, maintaining practice wickets
	▪ Goal Posts	Installation / removal / storage of goal posts [seasonal requirements]
Playgrounds 44 playgrounds	▪ Inspections	All playgrounds inspected by 11am 7 days per week, for damage / graffiti /syringes Detailed audit / inspection undertaken fortnightly
	▪ Repairs	As required from inspection /audit results
	▪ Softfall	Softfall raked daily Levels topped up as required Softfall rotary hoed 3 monthly
Park Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seats, tables, barbecues, shelters, pathways, bollards, ▪ fences, lighting etc 	Programmed maintenance undertaken Repairs undertaken as required
Turf Areas	▪ Litter control	Daily collection
	▪ Mowing	Maintained below 70mm in height
	▪ Weed and pest	Seasonal control
Irrigation	▪ Garden Beds	Automated – stand alone /computer and radio controlled
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sportsgrounds /Open Space ▪ Repairs / maintenance 	Radio / computer controlled Manual – quick coupler type

AREA	ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY LEVEL
Horticultural Maintenance	▪ Carparks / traffic treatments	Fortnightly service / adherence to spec
	▪ Open Space	Fortnightly service / adherence to spec
	▪ Annual beds	Weekly service
	▪ Shopping Centre landscapes	
	▪ Perennial beds	Fortnightly service
Park Inspections / Safety checks	▪ Litter / damage	Daily inspection /report
[All parks]	▪ Vandalism	Daily inspection /report
	▪ Graffiti	Daily inspection – removed within 24 hours of report
	▪ Syringes	Daily inspection /report – removed immediately upon detection
Public Toilets	▪ Cleaning	Daily
	▪ Graffiti	Removed within 48 hours
	▪ Maintenance	Programmed and reactive works
Street Trees	Powerline clearance	Annual audit / line clearance program Annual Management Plan submitted to OCEI
	Planting	Approximately 1200 advanced trees p.a.
	Watering	Water cart operates approx. 8 months of the year.
	Footpath Clearance	Programmed clearance every 2 years
	Reactive works	Request inspected / works programmed within 48 hours.
	Remedial works	As required
	Root barrier installation	Approximately 1000 linear metres p.a.
	Removals	Approximately 600 p.a.

Staff Resources

Park Services currently employs 43 EFT staff to provide the above services.

Agency staff are engaged during peak workloads, to ensure agreed standards are maintained

Plant / Vehicle Resources

The following Council owned plant / vehicle items are engaged to perform the services

SERVICE	PLANT /VEHICLE
Sportsgrounds	3 x Tractors, 1 x ute, 3 mowing decks, 1 x 4 tonne tipper
Park Maintenance	3 x Twin cab trucks, 4 utes, 1X 7 tonne tipper, 1 x skidsteer loader, 6 x ride-on mowers, 1 x 2 tonne tipper, 3 x tradesman vans
Tree Maintenance	1 x travel tower, 1 x chipper, 1 x 7 tonne tipper, 1 x 4 tonne tipper, 1 x 2 tonne tipper, 2 x utes

Budget: 2002 / 2003

Horticultural Maintenance

- Operating – Expenditure \$3,509,834

Arboricultural Maintenance

- Operating – Expenditure \$987,479

There is minimal opportunity for income generation due to the nature of service provision

Operating Hours

Park Services operates out of the Parks depot based within Caulfield Park Inkerman Road frontage.

Business hours are 7:15am to 4:15pm Monday to Friday.

After Hours Emergency Response

An emergency after hours service is provided to respond to both Tree and Park emergency maintenance issues.

Park Services is also trained and equipped to assist in the event of an activated Municipality Emergency, by operating the Municipality Operations Centre to control its own resources.

2. BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

Until recently, it had been difficult to identify a Local Government Authority providing Park Maintenance services, which could be looked at as an example of Best Practice.

The introduction and subsequent result of CCT saw councils implement radical changes to the way park maintenance services were delivered. Many councils opted to engage external contractors, who had been gearing up and promising to deliver quality services more efficient and cost effectively than previous in-house teams.

A number of councils retained their In-house teams, believing the proven track record, coupled with the flexibility to service delivery offered by In-house units, provided advantage over the unproven promises of the external contractors.

The result has been a mixed level of standards and costs in service delivery. A number of contractors have provided poor standards in service delivery, in an attempt to keep costs down in order to return profits from a tight and competitive market.

Until recently, this competitiveness has resulted in Service Units being very guarded in disclosing costs, service delivery methods and other relevant data associated with service delivery.

Park Maintenance KPI's

In September 2001, 16 Melbourne Region Local Government Authorities [including Glen Eira] agreed to work together to develop a strategic set of indicators, which were closely aligned to their Park / Tree management / maintenance operations.

Integrated Open Space Services [IOSS] co-ordinated the program and encouraged participation of Melbourne Councils

The following 16 Councils participated in developing the strategic set of Indicators:

City of Banyule	City of Boroondara	City of Brimbank
City of Darebin	City of Frankston	City of Glen Eira
City of Hobsons Bay	City of Knox	City of Manningham
City of Maribyrnong	City of Maroondah	City of Moreland
City of Port Philip	City of Stonnington	City of Whitehorse
Shire of Mornington Peninsula		

Methodology

The group adopted the following steps in September 2001:

Step	Details	Status
1	Workshop aimed at identifying 4 to 7 KPI's [and their measurement systems] for Park and Street Tree Management was conducted. The methods for measurement were then circulated to each Council.	Completed September 2001
2	Each Organisation determined its baseline measurements for each KPI and <u>IOSS</u> audited the processes for consistency of information	Completed November 2001
3	<u>IOSS</u> reported to each Council on how their <u>KPIs</u> compared on a regional basis. Confidentiality was assured in the same way as with Benchmark Park User Satisfaction Surveys	Completed December 2001
4.	The process was reviewed and the protocols for continual measurement confirmed	February 2002

The following Baseline Key Performance Indicators were agreed upon and set:

1. Mowing cost per hectare
2. User satisfaction with park management
3. Cost of developed and conservation park maintenance per Council resident and hectare
4. Percentage of park expenditure to Council budget
5. % compliance to park and street tree maintenance specification audit
6. Street tree management costs per resident, per tree and per kilometre of urban road.

Table 1 – has been deleted as it contains confidential information.

Performance Comparisons on KPI's

Mowing Cost /Hectare /Cut

This KPI includes the costs associated with:

- Litter pickup of grassed areas prior to mowing
- Mowing, and
- Edge trimming /edge spraying to reduce grass incursion in developed parklands

Result

Whilst Glen Eira has a relatively small area of open space that requires cutting compared to many councils, Park Services cost per hectare cut is one of the most cost effective, with a result lower than the median.

User Satisfaction with Park Maintenance

Monitoring customer satisfaction with Councils activities is considered an important element of “best value” processes. Three measurement systems were reported:

- Department of Infrastructure [DOI] Survey Results Pertaining to Parks reported in May 2001
- IOSS- Benchmark Park User Satisfaction Survey
- Standardised Council Survey Questions Pertaining to Parks and Street Trees

Results

Park Services scored well with user satisfaction in relation to the DOI report, with Glen Eira scoring an above average result with a score equal to the median.

It is important to note that the DOI results for May 2002 show significant improvement in results from 2001 [this will be addressed in more detail further in this report]

The IOSS- Survey results show Glen Eira receive one of the highest satisfaction scores of the 16 participating Councils, with a score well above the average and median score results.

Glen Eira does not undertake internal surveys on Parks and Street Tree maintenance levels, but relies on independent survey specialists.

Cost of Developed and Conservation Parkland Maintenance /Capita and Hectare

This KPI is used to determine the proportion of Council expenditure for developed park maintenance per Council resident and hectare.

Result

The results showed Glen Eira scored well, with the cost of developed park maintenance per resident below both the median and average costs.

The cost of developed park maintenance per hectare was higher than the average and median, but this can be attributed to the additional maintenance responsibilities Park Services handles such as signage, pathways, playground repairs, toilet maintenance, utility costs etc, that most Parks departments do not have responsibility for.

Percentage of Park Expenditure to Council Budget

Whilst this KPI is not directly in the scope of Park Maintenance Best Value, it does provide a useful mechanism to gauge the consistency of Council and regional prioritisation towards park expenditure.

Result

The results show Glen Eira allocates a lower than average and median percentage of recurrent expenditure to Parks. However, they also show that Glen Eira allocates a higher than average and median percentage of Capital expenditure to Parks expenditure. This is evident in the implementation of Council's Master Planning process for park upgrades, with Packer /Mallanbool and Allnut Parks being good examples.

Percentage Compliance to Park and Street Tree Maintenance Specification

Most Councils who participated in this program undertake regular compliance audits against their park and street tree maintenance specifications. Although each specification and audit criteria may differ, it was considered useful to report percentage compliance to these audits.

Glen Eira has undertaken regular internal monthly audits for a number of years, to ensure compliance with Council's Park Maintenance specification.

Result

Park Services scored well with a result significantly higher than the average and median score results.

No internal audit results on compliance to Street Tree Maintenance were available, but Tree Maintenance performance in relation to Council expectations will be outlined further in this report.

Street Tree Management Costs /Resident, Tree and Kilometre of Urban Road

Street trees provide important "green" linkage components within the urban fabric. Although this has been acknowledged, there appears to be differing political/management views as to their importance.

Whilst this KPI is not directly in the scope of Park Maintenance Best Value, it can be used to determine the proportion of Council expenditure on street tree expenditure against the number of Council residents, trees and kilometre of urban road.

Result

The results showed Glen Eira has an average Street Tree maintenance cost per resident, but a higher than average and median maintenance cost per tree.

Glen Eira also recorded a higher than average and median tree maintenance cost per linear kilometre.

Industry source suggest that tree maintenance costs are likely to increase with higher contractor charges in the future.

3. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

In accordance with Best Value principles, a number of recent community consultation programs have been undertaken to gauge customer satisfaction levels with both Park maintenance and Street Tree maintenance.

Four areas of Community consultation have been undertaken or examined and reviewed:

- Integrated Open Space Services [IOSS] Park User Satisfaction Benchmark Survey April 2002
- Newton Wayman Chong [NWC] Annual Satisfaction Survey 2002
- Glen Eira Sporting Club User Groups [Quarterly Committee Meetings results]
- Council's Customer Request Tracking System

Park User Satisfaction Benchmark Survey

The Benchmark Park User Satisfaction Survey undertaken by Integrated Open Space Services [IOSS], was developed to measure users satisfaction with the level of park maintenance and to provide a confidential means for comparison of results on an intra-regional basis. Fifteen Melbourne Councils participated in the survey.

This is the third annual survey undertaken and the latest survey result is referred to in the table below as Round 3.

102 park user intercept surveys were conducted in 13 of Glen Eira's parks. Of the 102 surveys, 35 were conducted in our Regional parks, with the remaining 67 conducted in our Local / District parks [detailed report appendix 2]

Park users were interviewed at random, with an attempt to survey participants undertaking a range of activities and during a range of park usage times.

While the survey focused on the park users' perceived standard of maintenance; the following data was also obtained:

- Demographic information of the participant (age, gender, place of residence).
- Primary activity of participant at time of interview.
- Park users' requirements / desires regarding provision of facilities and services. (Note: this does not include importance of facilities or priority for development.)
- Perceived safety levels in the park.
- General comments.

Survey Results

Glen Eira City Council gained excellent results from the Park User Satisfaction Survey, receiving the highest mean result of the 15 participating Councils.

The results were very positive in terms of user perceptions of the maintenance standards within the reserves, as the survey was undertaken with people who were actually engaged in activities within the parks, rather than a telephone survey, which relies on the perception and recollections of past experiences.

Of a particular positive note was the response to Park Safety, with the vast majority of park users believing Glen Eira parks to be safe.

Age Cohort	No. of Participants
Teenagers	14
20 - 30 yrs	28
31 - 45 yrs	39
46 - 60 yrs	12
Above 60 yrs	9

Gender of Survey Participants

Gender	No. of Participants
Females	53
Males	49

Table 1 *Age / Gender groups of park survey participants*

Activities

The survey participants were engaged in the following activities at the time of the survey:

Activity	No. of Participants	Parks
Walking	18	Caulfield Park x 8 Duncan McKinnon Reserve x 5 Koornang Park x 2 Harleston Park x 1 Boyd Park x 1 Centenary Park x 1
Using Play Equipment	16	Caulfield Park x 5 Hopetoun Gardens x 3 Joyce Park x 3 Harleston Park x 2 Packer Park x 2 Boyd Park x 1
Enjoying Outdoors / Nature	12	Caulfield Park x 4 Harleston Park x 3 Hopetoun Gardens x 2 Boyd Park x 1 Allnut Park x 1 Packer Park x 1
Walking Dog	11	Boyd Park x 3 Caulfield Park x 3 Centenary Park x 1 Mackie Rd Reserve x 1 Bailey Reserve x 1 Duncan McKinnon Reserve x 1 Allnut Park x 1
Playing Sport	9	Caulfield Park x 3 Allnut Park x 2 Centenary Park x 2 Mackie Rd Reserve x 2
Picnicking	6	Harleston Park x 2 Allnut Park x 2 Murrumbeena Park x 2
Jogging	5	Duncan McKinnon Reserve x 4 Bailey Reserve x 1
Supervising Children	5	Duncan McKinnon Reserve x 1 Packer Park x 1 Allnut Park x 1 Bailey Reserve x 1 Murrumbeena Park x 1
Playing Social Games	4	Harleston Park x 2 Koornang Park x 2
Socialising	4	Koornang Park x 2 Murrumbeena Park x 2

Activity	No. of Participants	Parks
Reading	3	Caulfield Park x 1 Koornang Park x 1 Murrumbeena Park x 1
Cycling	2	Packer Park
Having Smoko / Lunch	2	Joyce Park
Community Program	2	Centenary Park x 1 Mackie Rd Reserve x 1
Skateboarding	2	Bailey Reserve
Roller Blading	1	Allnut Park

Personal Safety Within Park

Response	No. of Participants	Park
Park is safe	93	
Park is safe, daytime only	3	Koornang Park x 2 Caulfield Park x 1
Park is safe, but I have been stalked here	1	Caulfield Park
Park is safe, except for off-leash big dogs	1	Caulfield Park
Park is safe, except for big dogs	2	Caulfield Park
Park is safe, but dangerous around the pond – no fence (around pond)	1	Caulfield Park
Park is not safe, because sometimes older kids tell us to get off the ramp	1	Bailey Reserve

Table 2 *Majority of park users believe Glen Eira's parks to be safe*

Survey Participants Scores on Level of Maintenance - Round 3

	Glen Eira Mean Score Round 1	Glen Eira Mean Score Round 2	Glen Eira Mean Score Round 3	Melbourne Regional Mean Score Round 3	Melbourne Highest ** Mean Score Round 3
Garden Beds	7.3	7.3	8.1	7.3	9.0
Grass Length	8.1	8.4	8.5	8.0	8.7
Grass Quality	8.1	7.5	7.9	7.2	7.9
Tree Health	8.1	8.5	9.0	8.4	9.2
Boardwalks, Bridges & Piers	*8.2	*8.9	8.2	8.0	9.1
Recreation Facilities	8.4	8.1	8.2	7.9	8.9
Shelters	7.8	8.0	7.7	7.2	8.1
BBQs	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.0	8.4
Tables & Seats	8.3	7.5	8.2	7.3	8.2
Taps & Bubblers	5.8	6.7	7.3	6.1	7.6
Play Equipment	8.0	8.2	8.4	8.0	9.4
P/E Undersurfacing	7.9	8.3	8.4	7.8	8.7
Toilets	*7.5	7.7	6.7	5.6	7.1
Ground Litter	8.0	7.9	8.0	7.5	8.3
Rubbish Bins	7.6	8.3	8.3	7.6	8.8
Fences/Barriers	7.9	8.4	7.8	7.6	8.3
Signs	7.7	8.0	7.9	7.3	8.1
Pathways & Trails	7.9	8.2	8.1	7.9	8.6
Internal Roads & Carparks	8.1	8.4	7.6	7.3	8.1
Graffiti Removal	8.0	8.5	8.2	7.3	8.3
Repair of Damage	7.5	8.0	8.4	7.8	8.4
Land Drainage	6.8	6.6	7.3	7.3	7.8
Banks of Watercourses	*6.0	7.8	7.3	7.0	7.8
Health of Bushland Vegetation	-	-	8.7	8.3	8.9
Mean	7.8	8.0	8.0	7.5	8.0

Table 3 *Glen Eira recorded highest mean score on level of park maintenance*

* Sample size was < 20 responses.

** Includes only those areas where the sample size was > 20 responses

Survey participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the maintenance of each of 25 park elements on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest. The scores shown in the table are the mean of the participants' responses.

Note

Sample sizes below 20 respondents should be considered with caution.

**Department of Infrastructure Annual Community Satisfaction Survey 2002
[Undertaken by Newton Wayman Chong]**

The 2002 Community Satisfaction Survey is the fifth survey undertaken to measure Victorian resident’s perceptions about the performance of their local government. A minimum of 350 telephone interviews are conducted in each of the 75 participating Victorian municipalities with a “head of household”.

Glen Eira performed well relative to the highest, lowest and median results for participating Councils in the “Appearance of Public Areas Key Service Area”, with a score above the median and close to the highest point on the scale.

Result

Of the nine identified key service areas and their respective responsibilities within Glen Eira, Appearance of Public Areas rated the equal second highest score for overall performance.

KEY SERVICE AREA RESULTS	Indexed Mean
1. Local Roads and Footpaths	61
2. Health and Human Services	71
3. Recreational Facilities	72
4. Appearance of Public Areas	72
5. Traffic Management and Parking Facilities	62
6. Waste Management	76
7. Enforcement of By Laws	69
8. Economic Development	60
9. Town Planning Policy and Approvals	60

Table 4 *DOI Survey ranked Appearance of Open Space equal 2nd highest of the 9 key service areas*

The previous chart shows the “Indexed Means” for all the key measures. For each measure, residents indicated their level of satisfaction on a five-point scale: Excellent – 5, Good – 4, Adequate – 3, Needs some improvement – 2, Needs a lot of improvement – 1.

The Indexed Mean is calculated by taking the mean value for all respondents on the five point scale and multiplying by 20 to convert them to an index of up to 100.

Satisfaction Levels

- Satisfaction levels with appearance of public areas has continued to improve since 1998 when the surveys first commenced
 - remains higher than the Median Result and close to the highest score on the scale.
 - a significant increase of 6% from 16% to 22% of respondents who rated appearance of public areas as “excellent”
 - 65% of respondents rated the appearance of public areas as either “excellent and good”
 - a drop of 5% of respondents since 2000, who felt appearance of public areas needed improvement

Improvement needed

See table below:

Of the 60 respondents who felt improvement of appearance of public areas was needed:

- 19 wanted more frequent / better pruning of street trees
- 11 felt better maintenance of parks and gardens was required
- 4 wanted more frequent / better litter removal in parks and gardens
- 3 wanted more / better cleaning up of dog litter
- 1 wanted more /better cleaning of public toilets

Appearance of Public Areas Need for Improvement

	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS:	60
More frequent street cleaning	42%	
More frequent/better pruning of street trees	32%	
Better maintenance of parks and gardens	18%	
More frequent sweeping of leaves	10%	
More frequent/better removal of litter in parks and gardens	8%	
Better landscaping/design (eg. more colour, more shady trees)	5%	
Better maintenance of amenities (eg. BBQ's, Picnic tables, toilets etc) within parks/gardens	5%	
More/better cleaning up of dog litter	5%	
More street trees	3%	
More/better cleaning up of condoms, syringes etc in parks, beaches etc	3%	
More frequent clearing of public litter bins	3%	
Improve streetscapes with landscape or architectural features	3%	
More public litter bins	3%	
Better/different types/mix of trees	2%	
Quicker/more frequent removal of graffiti	2%	
Better/different time of day/week for street cleaning	2%	
More/better cleaning of toilet blocks	2%	
More frequent slashing/mowing of public areas	0%	
Better maintenance of beaches, lakes, rivers etc and surrounding areas	0%	
More parks and gardens/open spaces	0%	
More frequent spraying of weeds in open spaces	0%	
Better amenities within parks/gardens (eg. BBQ's. Picnic tables, toilets etc)	0%	
More emphasis on smaller towns	0%	
Too much money/resources wasted on landscaping and/or streetscapes	0%	
Restrict billboards, other advertising signage and other eyesores	0%	
More frequent watering of green public areas	0%	

Table 5 ***Appearance of Open Space Need for Improvement***

City of Glen Eira Customer Requests Tracking System [CRTS]

Glen Eira Council places high importance on prompt response to the needs and requests of the Glen Eira community, including requests for street tree work, naturestrip repairs, general park issues etc.

Park Services has continually concentrated on improving the response rates to customer requests, with consistent prompt response times now established.

All requests from residents are tracked centrally through the Customer Service Centre onto Council's **Customer Request Tracking System**.

Park Services currently average **4.6 days** to close a Customer Request for all categories under their responsibility [which includes weekend days and public holidays]

The tables below show the improved response times to the average closing of requests logged onto the system for both Park and Tree issues.

AVERAGE DAYS TO CLOSE A CUSTOMER REQUEST FOR STREET TREES ISSUES		
YEAR	REQUESTS	DAYS TO CLOSE
1997	1503	44.67
1998	1749	42.43
1999	3073	8.57
2000	3130	7.7
2001	2989	6.01

Table 6 *Improved response times for Tree Issues*

AVERAGE DAYS TO CLOSE A CUSTOMER REQUEST FOR PARK ISSUES		
YEAR	REQUESTS	DAYS TO CLOSE
1997	704	12.88
1998	754	14.41
1999	875	7.05
2000	890	9.05
2001	1476	3.24

Table 7 *Improved response times to Park Issues*

Sporting Club User Groups

Many sporting and community groups enjoy the quality recreational facilities available within Glen Eira Reserves.

The Recreation Services Department of Council manages the recreational reserve facilities, with individual reserves represented by a Recreation Advisory Committee.

The low number of concerns and complaints raised at the quarterly meetings held by each reserve committee, has been used to measure satisfaction of park maintenance standards by user groups.

The table below shows the low number of concerns and requests for additional works raised at Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee meetings:

Recreation Reserve Advisory Committee Maintenance Issues			
Year	Complaint	Compliment	Request for Additional works
1998 -1999	4		15
1999 - 2000	6	1	13
2000 - 2001	3	3	5
2001 - 2002	2	2	12

Table 8 Low concern levels from Reserve Advisory Committees.

4. PROPOSED SERVICE MODEL

The proposal is to continue to use Park Services in its current form [as detailed in section 1.4] to deliver the service of maintaining Council's Open Space facilities.

The current service model is working effectively in the key service delivery areas of customer satisfaction, quality of service delivery, cost to provide park maintenance services, and response to customer needs.

Minor changes are recommended to the staff structure of the business unit to ensure efficiencies are met and maintained within the Street Trees area. [See 4.2]

4.1 Quality Management Systems

Park Services has reviewed their Quality processes and business practices with a view to attaining accreditation under the Australian Business Excellence Framework within the next two years.

A review of the Park Services Quality Manual was also undertaken with modifications implemented to improve workflow process, data capture and operational procedures.

4.2 Street Tree Management

The results of The IOSS Baseline KPI for Street Tree Management Benchmarking process, revealed Glen Eira recorded higher than average and median maintenance \$ costs per tree and per linear kilometer, of the 16 councils benchmarked.

The Department of Infrastructure Annual Community Satisfaction Survey identified 32% of the 60 respondents who felt improvement of appearance of public open space was needed, wanted more frequent / better pruning of street trees.

The day to day management and maintenance of street trees is currently undertaken by the Operations Coordinator, who is also responsible for maintenance of park infrastructure, plant and equipment, quality assurance and general operations systems.

A review of tree and infrastructure maintenance operations has identified current staff resource allocation is insufficient to manage all areas effectively. To effectively manage the Street Tree section of Park Services, a full-time qualified Arborist is needed.

A full time qualified Arborist would be responsible for managing the day to day tree maintenance operations, in addition to the following responsibilities:

- Conduct a review of Council's Street Tree Strategy, with emphasis on more suitable street tree selection and on-going review.

- Report and make recommendations on alleged and potential claims of damage to property caused by Council trees.
- Implement and maintain a Street Tree database to effectively manage Glen Eira's tree resource.
- It is strongly recommended that to effectively manage and maintain Glen Eira's tree resource, Council appoint a full-time Tree Coordinator with arboricultural qualifications.

5. APPLICATION OF BEST VALUE PRINCIPLES

Best Value Principle No. 1

All services provided by Council must meet Quality and Cost Standards

Quality and cost standards have three components, first, councils must scope and identify the services they provide, secondly, they must set quality and cost standards and thirdly, they must establish a performance measurement system.

Council is required to take into consideration the following 5 factors (Sec 208C) in setting quality and cost standards

- ***The need to review services against the best on offer in both the public and private sectors***
- An assessment of value for money in service delivery
- Community expectations and values
- The balance of affordability and accessibility of services to the community.
- Opportunities for local employment growth or retention

Quality Standards

The quality standards for Open Space maintenance have been established to accepted horticultural standards and measured based on the results of the comprehensive annual customer satisfaction surveys detailed in section 3 of this report.

The annual results of the surveys will continue to be reviewed and benchmarked against other Councils to ensure the high level of customer satisfaction with maintenance of Glen Eira's Open Space is maintained.

Cost Standards

Park Services utilises a comprehensive Job Costing System developed in-house, to accurately track costs for all aspects of park maintenance. The business unit utilises the collected data to monitor costs for a range of activities and locations. Staff have been thoroughly trained in data capture techniques and analysis, to ensure established cost standards are maintained.

During 2001, Glen Eira Park Services participated along with 15 other Councils to develop a strategic set of indicators, which were closely aligned to the success of Park / Street Tree management and maintenance operations.

Baseline information was provided by all Councils who participated in the process, with information presented in the following table audited against agreed calculation methods.

Table 10 – has been deleted as it contains confidential information.

Best Value Principle No. 2

All services provided by Council must be responsive to the needs of the community

In applying this principle Council has a responsibility to the whole community, future and current as well as to the users of the specific service

Community and Service User Needs

Park Safety

Community and user needs towards park maintenance remain generally static, except for a growing awareness and expectation of ensuring park safety, particularly towards playgrounds and sportsgrounds.

Park Services ensures park safety by undertaking regular and timely park inspections, including the following procedures:

- 7 day per week inspections of playgrounds, ensuring completion of inspections of all playgrounds by 11am daily.
- Programmed inspections of all Sportsgrounds to ensure a safe playing surface for users.
- All park maintenance faults identified by staff are documented and reported immediately upon detection, using an in-house developed Internal Reporting System

Community Consultation

- Future park maintenance requirements will continue to be addressed through the park Master Plan consultation process, which involves key interest group representatives, to ensure all issues are identified, discussed and addressed.
- Regular analysis of the customer requests received through the Customer Request Tracking System provides a measure of specific maintenance requirements, to ensure concerns are being addressed.
- Council's Glen Eira News and the local press print regular articles for the community regarding the City's parks on a regular basis, explaining Council's works programs, activities and issues.
- Council approved signage is installed in parks advising the community of upcoming works. In addition, local residents are advised via letter of impending works in their area.

Best Value Principle No. 3

Each service provided by a Council must be accessible to those members of the community for whom the service is intended

The Glen Eira Open Space Long Term Strategy was prepared by the City of Glen Eira in 1998 to assess the recreational requirements within the municipality and the existing open space facilities. The Strategy provides long term guidelines and opportunities for the future development of recreational facilities and open space within the City of Glen Eira.

The services are available to the community through:

- Customer Service Centre
- Recreational Interactive Website
- Customer Request Tracking System
- The community is advised of access to the services via the Council and Community Resource Guide, Council's website at www.gleneira.vic.gov.au, and the Glen Eira News.

Best Value Principle No. 4

Council must achieve continuous improvement in the provision of services for its community

Council needs to demonstrate what mechanisms it has in place to drive continuous improvement

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement shall be achieved in the following areas:

Staff

Increased flexibility of staff deployment through multi-skilling by:

- Twice yearly staff appraisals and reviews on all staff
- Training needs analysis
- Actively encouraging additional training / further education
- Attendance and participation at industry seminars and workshops
- Active membership in Parks and Leisure Australia

Costs

- Set Key Performance Indicators on cost standards involving 16 participating Councils are reviewed and reported on annually.
- Comprehensive Job Costing System tracks accurate costs for park maintenance activities.

Customer Service Levels

Monitoring customer satisfaction with park maintenance activities is considered an important element in continuous improvement.

- Two annual measurement systems are utilised:
 - Annual Department of Infrastructure [DOI] Survey
 - IOSS – Annual Benchmark Park User Satisfaction Survey

Best Value Principle No. 5

Council must develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides

Council has developed a program of regular consultation with its community as listed below:

Community

- Annual Department of Infrastructure [DOI] Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Integrated Open Space Services [IOSS] Park User Satisfaction Benchmark Survey
- Monitoring of Council's Customer Request Tracking System

Internal

Council has scheduled regular internal meetings to keep abreast of community consultation and communication.

- Quarterly activity reports
- Executive Meetings
- Monthly Senior Management Group meetings
- Weekly Infrastructure Division Managers meetings
- Monthly Infrastructure Division meetings

Best Value Principle No. 6

Council must report regularly to its community on its achievements in relation to the other five principles

The results of Park Maintenance Best Value Review will be reported in Council's Annual Report to the community.

Council will report on the following Key Performance Indicators:

- To the Community
 - Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey – 2002 rating results to be maintained or improved
 - Analysis of response times to Customer Requests – minimum 95% of requests to be handled within agreed time.
 - Percentage compliance with Parks Maintenance Specification Audit.
 - Unit costs to be maintained at current levels subject to price movements from external suppliers.

Key Performance Indicators	Target	Actual Performance
<p><u>Quality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Community Satisfaction Survey • Customer Request response times • Compliance with park maintenance specification audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal to or greater than 72% • 95% of requests actioned within time • Equal to or greater than 95% 	
<p><u>Cost</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mowing cost per hectare per cut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain service at current cost plus accepted industry increases. 	
<p><u>Note:</u> Unit costs can be impacted by external material cost increases over which Council has no control.</p>		

6. RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

Risk has been defined as *“any unplanned event that will have an adverse impact on service areas ability to deliver consistent and required quality outcomes.*

Park Services manages risk by ensuring compliance with:

- all legislative requirements
- relevant standards
- documented procedures
- ensuring appropriate controls are in place for all areas of identified risk.

Park Services is currently working closely with Corporate Counsel and Risk Management Coordinator to finalise a comprehensive Risk Register database including appropriate controls.

The Park Services Risk Register identifies key areas of risk and appropriate controls to manage the risk.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers have recently completed an audit of open space management processes and procedures. In part the report states:

“Overall, we believe that there are sound procedures over the maintenance of open space. There are inspection programs in place which we understand are designed to ensure that key risks associated with the use of that space by the public, are appropriately managed.

Improvements are required to complete and further develop information in the risk register as well as to enhance reconciliations and cross checking of records between the finance and subsidiary asset recording systems. In addition, there is an opportunity to review current procedures in more detail to identify inefficiencies such as duplication of manual and CRTS/Park Services database records and to increase automation where possible.”

Key areas covered by the Park Services Risk Register include:

Compliance

- Legal and Standards
- 3rd Party Requirements
- Council Requirements

Contracts and Legal Relations

- Risk Partnerships
- Management

External Events

- Actions of Others

Financial Administration

- Management and Controls

Human Resource Management

- Health and Safety
- Resourcing

Liability

- Public

Information Technology

- Failure
- Security

Physical/Infrastructure Environment

- Conditions of Use
- Renewal

Operations

- Failure

Service performance

- Cessation due to OHS issues

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council continues to use Park Services in its current form to deliver the service of maintaining Council's Open Space facilities.

That Council appoints a full-time qualified Tree Coordinator to effectively manage and maintain Glen Eira's tree resource

That Council continues to participate in the annual Park User Satisfaction Benchmark Survey which currently involves 16 Melbourne Councils

That Park Services continue to participate in developing and reviewing a strategic set of indicators involving other Melbourne Councils, to assist with the success of their Park/Street Tree maintenance operations.

That the result of the Park Maintenance Best Value Review be reported in Council's Annual Report to the community

That Executive endorses the recommendations of the Park Maintenance Best Value Report and recognizes that the Service has satisfied the Best Value principles.