

Preliminary report: Review of the range of courses servicing the parks and leisure industry

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Background:

This review was undertaken for the AIPR Trust Fund - Education (through its Secretary Dr Geoff Edwards) and is a first step toward assessing the need to:

- develop an on-line content-rich training course of national and perhaps international generality, with relevant materials attached. Such an initiative would need to steer a path way between MOOC courses available online from international universities and local university-specific or TAFE-specific courses that are already well catered for.

It was agreed that a first step in taking one or both of these project proposals forward is to identify what post-secondary training courses are already available within Australia (TAFE and university); and what materials support them, both proprietary and open source. A supplementary step would be to make enquiries as to whether the institutions delivering these courses would welcome a repository of the kind described above or whether they are already self-sufficient.

It should also be noted that this is a preliminary review: having undertaken these steps it is clear that the question has not been answered but suggestions have been included regarding how to further progress the review. Also, it isn't easy to identify the learning materials that go with any course as this is copyright material for each institution and available only to enrolled students.

Steps undertaken:

- A review of all university courses to identify courses likely to service the parks and leisure industry
- A review of courses available on the Training.gov.au website to identify courses likely to service the parks and leisure industry
- The sector category of likely employment, allocated against all courses identified – this was done by the author and really was a 'best guess'. The sector categories used were those used by PLA (Appendix 1)
- A summary of PLA member survey 2014 data regarding sectors of employment, used to provide a comparison of numbers employed in each sector, and therefore assumed demand for each course type.

Assumptions:

- Courses relating to Environmental management were allocated to state and national parks as the primary column
- Aquatic recreation may be covered in sports courses (it clearly does for some courses)
- Facility management was not assumed to be in any course – but it may well be
- Cemeteries were not assumed to be in any course
- Most Registered Training Organisations would have their courses listed on the government site.

Review data:

Table 1: Count of courses available by broad industry sector category relevant to PLA

Broad industry sector	Total count of courses (primary focus)	Total count of courses (secondary and other foci)	Total count
community and urban planning	62	6	68
parks, environment, biodiversity and conservation	82	9	91
sport and physical activity	86	9	95
tourism, arts and interpretation	42	6	48
sector support	0	0	0

Table 1 is a count of the sector categories that are covered by the courses reviewed. The most obvious sector category was allocated to the primary column (primary focus); but it is possible and likely that some courses provide training for other sectors. For example Sport and health science was allocated *sport development* as the primary category, and *health* as a secondary category. Sports management was allocated *sport development* as the primary category, *health* as a secondary category, and *aquatic recreation* as another secondary category.

Table 2: Summary of the review of existing courses, sorted by primary column

Specific category	Total count of courses (primary focus)	Total count of courses (secondary and other foci)	Total count
Sport development	54	3	57
State and national parks (Natural area management)	42	5	47
Major events	35	6	41
Community planning	27	5	32
Health	24	47	71
Urban planning	19	12	31
Horticulture	16	5	21
Ecosystems	13	51	64
Landscape design	12	2	14
Recreation planning	8	7	15
Interpretation	7	6	13
Outdoor recreation	6	1	7
Parks and gardens	3	18	21
Arboriculture	2		2
Play and playspaces	1		1
Facility management	1		1
Cemeteries	0		0
Aquatic recreation	0	51	51
Cultural events	0	42	42
Art installations / connections	0	1	1
Open space planning		2	2
Universities	0		0

Table 2 is a summary of the collected data from the review of the university courses and registered training organisations. As with Table 1 the primary column is the dominant sector provided for by this course, but it is highly likely that others are also serviced. However, the ‘secondary and other columns’ represents more ‘guesswork’ and should therefore be considered with greater caution. But it can be seen that some sectors don’t appear to have any course providing for them such as aquatic recreation and open space planning. Cultural events is anomaly – there are many events courses but ‘major events’ was always listed in the primary column and so the secondary column here does reflect the number of courses available for cultural events.

Table 3: PLA membership work sector (number and rank) – NB more than one response was allowed (2014 member survey; 119 respondents) with rank of course availability

Sector name	Number whose work includes this sector (PLA member survey 2014)	Rank Members working in the sectors (PLA member survey)	Rank Availability of courses for the sectors
Recreation planning	71	1 (highest number of members work in this sector)	10/4
Open space planning	56	2	21
Sport development	50	3	1 (highest number of courses)
Play and playspaces	46	4	15
Facility management	46	5	16
Parks and gardens	41	6	13
Outdoor recreation	34	7	12
Landscape design	27	8	9
Events	26	9	3
Urban planning	23	10	6
Horticulture	23	11	7
Aquatic recreation	21	12	18
Arboriculture	18	13	14
Arts and interpretation	13	14	11
Health	10	15	5
State and national parks	6	16	2
Research and academia	6	17	22
Cemeteries	5	18	17

Table 3 indicates that for a large proportion of PLA members, their primary tasks include recreation planning and open space planning; indeed the top six sectors are: recreation planning, open space planning, sport development, play and playspaces, facility management, and parks and gardens. If this sample reflects the broader industry situation then we need adequate courses to provide training in these areas. A quick look at the ABS indicates that in 2014-2015 4925 people were employed in parks and gardens operations, and 88545 were employed in sport and physical recreation. Interestingly these employment numbers are reflected by the course availability.

As noted previously this review is preliminary, and possibly raises more questions than it answers, so one should be alerted to possible dis-junctures rather than interpret the data as definitive. That said,

where the ranks of the last two columns differ greatly, Table 3 **alerts** us to the possibility that recreation planning, open space planning, playspaces, facility management, parks and gardens and outdoor recreation **may have inadequate** training provision.

A visual reflection on the data suggests that:

- The following sectors might be adequately catered for with respect to training courses:
 - sports sector
 - landscape design sector
 - Event management
 - Urban planning
 - Horticulture
 - Arboriculture
 - Arts / interpretation
 - Health
 - Environmental management / State and National parks
- There looks to be a lack of training opportunities across the following sectors:
 - Recreation planning
 - Open space planning
 - Play and play spaces
 - Facility management
 - Parks and gardens
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Aquatic recreation.

The weakness in the above data is that:

- It isn't known what skills or qualifications most employers are actually looking for – especially in the sectors for which relatively little training exists e.g. cemeteries, recreation planning
- Also the training sector has changed considerably over the last ten years; there used to be many recreation and leisure courses at university level; now there are very few
- It isn't known what 'pathway' people currently employed have followed to take up their position
- It is highly likely that some training providers were not reviewed, especially training provided in-house or by highly specific courses e.g. play spaces
- It is not clear if every state/region offers all these courses, or if they are available in rural areas
- Unless one has a login for each institution the resource materials are not usually available / accessible
- We don't know if the PLA member survey is a representative sample of all PLA members, or a representative sample of the industry.

Possible further steps:

- Identify what training employers / managers require of their staff
- Identify what training employees feel is missing
- Review industry magazines to identify course providers that may have been missed in this analysis
- Undertake an assessment of whether or not each sector's training is available in each region / state
- Using PLA full member data or ABS data identify proportions of people working in each of the sectors.

Appendix 1

Sector categories

Specific sectors in the parks and leisure industry as used by PLA	summary categories from Research working group survey (2015)
Community planning	community and urban planning
Recreation planning	community and urban planning
Play and play-spaces	community and urban planning
Open space planning	community and urban planning
Landscape design	community and urban planning
Urban planning	community and urban planning
Parks and gardens	parks, environment, biodiversity and conservation
Horticulture	parks, environment, biodiversity and conservation
Arboriculture	parks, environment, biodiversity and conservation
Cemeteries	parks, environment, biodiversity and conservation
State and national parks (Natural area management)	parks, environment, biodiversity and conservation
Ecosystems	parks, environment, biodiversity and conservation
Health	sport and physical activity
Sport development	sport and physical activity
Facility management	sport and physical activity
Outdoor recreation	sport and physical activity
Aquatic recreation	sport and physical activity
Major events	tourism, arts and interpretation
Cultural events	tourism, arts and interpretation
Interpretation	tourism, arts and interpretation
Art installations / connections	tourism, arts and interpretation
Universities	Sector support
TAFE	Sector support
Registered Training Organisations	Sector support
Other aligned industry associations	Sector support
Trade and suppliers	Sector support
Benchmarking	Sector support

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