



MELBOURNE CRICKET CLUB

# YARRA PARK ACTIVE RECREATION PRECINCT

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Recommendations Report  
Consultation Version

Yarra Park Master Plan 2025  
September 2025



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*insideEDGE* Sport and Leisure Planning were engaged by the Melbourne Cricket Club to review the Active Recreation Precinct in the northern section of Yarra Park.

The research, insights, key findings and recommendations from this project will be used to inform the development of the Yarra Park Master Plan 2025.

Our work was undertaken across three key stages and included the following tasks:

## **Stage One: Commencement and information gathering**

- Project briefing
- Review of relevant information such as the Yarra Park Master Plan (2010) and Yarra Park Recreation Plan (2011).
- Site visit and facilities audit of the Yarra Park Active Recreation Precinct.

## **Stage Two: Consultation and demand assessment**

- Internal project workshop
- Review of Yarra Park Master Plan Engagement Summary Report
- Consultation with Melbourne Cricket Club and City of Melbourne

## **Stage Three: Draft and Final Reporting**

- Research, analysis, insights and recommendations

## **Active Recreation**

Active recreation (non-competitive physical activity undertaken during leisure time) accounts for the majority of physical activity in the community. This form of activity has become increasingly important due to work, education and lifestyle commitments.

Yarra Park provides a network of accessible open space opportunities that are used for community recreation - including parks, trails and outdoor basketball/netball courts. Dedicated purpose-built facilities that create opportunities for active recreation are now becoming prominent due to increasing demand.

## **Key findings**

- City of Melbourne and the adjoining City of Yarra have a deficit of open space and high demand for informal recreation activities.
- City of Melbourne reported high demand for multi-sport courts catering for basketball and netball.
- The playground and other active recreation components in Yarra Park are not contemporary or best practice. Facilities lack variety and have only moderate play value.
- Consultation relevant to the Active Recreation Precinct identified a need for equipment upgrades, access to toilets and improved lighting.
- There is a trend towards intergenerational facilities that allows for young children, tweens, teens and adults to be active together at a single site.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are supported by the findings from the review of the existing Active Recreation Precinct, and the assessment of current and future needs for active recreation in Yarra Park:

- Redevelop the Yarra Park Active Recreation Precinct to create an intergenerational facility that is a destination and caters for a range of age groups.

Key components of the recommended facility would include:

- A regional play space designed for all ages and abilities including young children, tweens, teens and older adults.
- Multiple acrylic hard courts to accommodate a range of activities including basketball, netball and futsal.
- A formal fitness loop through Yarra Park which starts and stops at the Active Recreation Precinct - with appropriate signage and distance markers.
- Installation of a bike maintenance hub to compliment the active transport loop and a dedicated bike parking area.
- Picnic shelters, tables, seats, barbecues, drinking fountains, lighting and shaded areas.
- DDA compliant all gender toilet / changing places facility

Responding to the recommendation above, the Yarra Park Master Plan 2025 includes an opportunity under the Parkland and Amenity theme called 'Northern Recreation Space'. It proposes major upgrades to the existing Active Recreation Precinct. Other opportunities relating to pathway upgrades and lighting improvements will improve the safety of these spaces for active recreation.

# SITE CONTEXT

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The Yarra Park Active Recreation Precinct is on Crown Land in East Melbourne and is the responsibility of the Melbourne Cricket Club. The precinct is in the northern section of Yarra Park, close to Wellington Parade and Jolimont Train Station.

Yarra Park is one of Melbourne's premier public parklands, located within the Melbourne Sports and Entertainment Precinct and adjacent to the Melbourne CBD. It provides major sporting facilities such as the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) and the Richmond Cricket Ground/Punt Road Oval.

Together, the parkland and surrounding facilities provide important social (cultural and recreational), economic (tourism and employment) and environmental (open space) benefits to Victorians.

The Active Recreation Precinct is approximately 0.3 hectares and contains a range of active and passive infrastructure. Consultation insights from the development of the Yarra Park Master Plan identified that the precinct is mostly used by event day patrons attending the MCG.

Minor improvements to the precinct have occurred in the last 10 years, including a surface transformation from grass to gravel, additional park furniture and expansion of the basketball half court to include a separate netball ring.

**2013**



*Active Recreation Precinct in 2013 with natural grass surrounds*

**2023**



*Active Recreation Precinct in 2023 with gravel surrounds*

# EXISTING PROVISION

The Yarra Park Active Recreation Precinct provides local community level infrastructure including a playground, modified basketball / netball court, barbeque and picnic facilities, bike racks, drinking fountain and low-level lighting.

The precinct is popular with patrons attending the MCG on event days, with the playground attracting families and young children and the barbeque and picnic facilities used as a meeting point and social gathering space.

The City of Melbourne considers the precinct a valuable community asset. The City identified a shortfall in active recreation facilities and believes Yarra Park can play a significant role in addressing this demand in the future.

The Active Recreation Precinct has no on-site car parking or toilet facilities. Vehicle access to Yarra Park is restricted to MCG and Melbourne Park events only and the nearest toilet facility is located at Jolimont Station (approximately 150m).

There is good passive surveillance of the precinct on nonevent days, with the internal Yarra Park roadways and footpaths used frequently for exercising and commuting. The precinct is part of the active transport loop which provides opportunities to provide bike related facilities to support this use.

## ACTIVE RECREATION FACILITIES



*Partially fenced local community playground*



*Half court basketball and netball facility*



*Commuter and recreation bike racks*

## PASSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE



*Barbeque and picnic tables*



*Shade trees and drinking fountain*



*Access path from internal roadway to playground*

# CATCHMENT ANALYSIS

Yarra Park is surrounded by heavily populated inner-city suburbs such as Carlton, Fitzroy, Collingwood, Richmond and Cremorne. These suburbs are within the broader catchment of the Yarra Park Active Recreation Precinct.

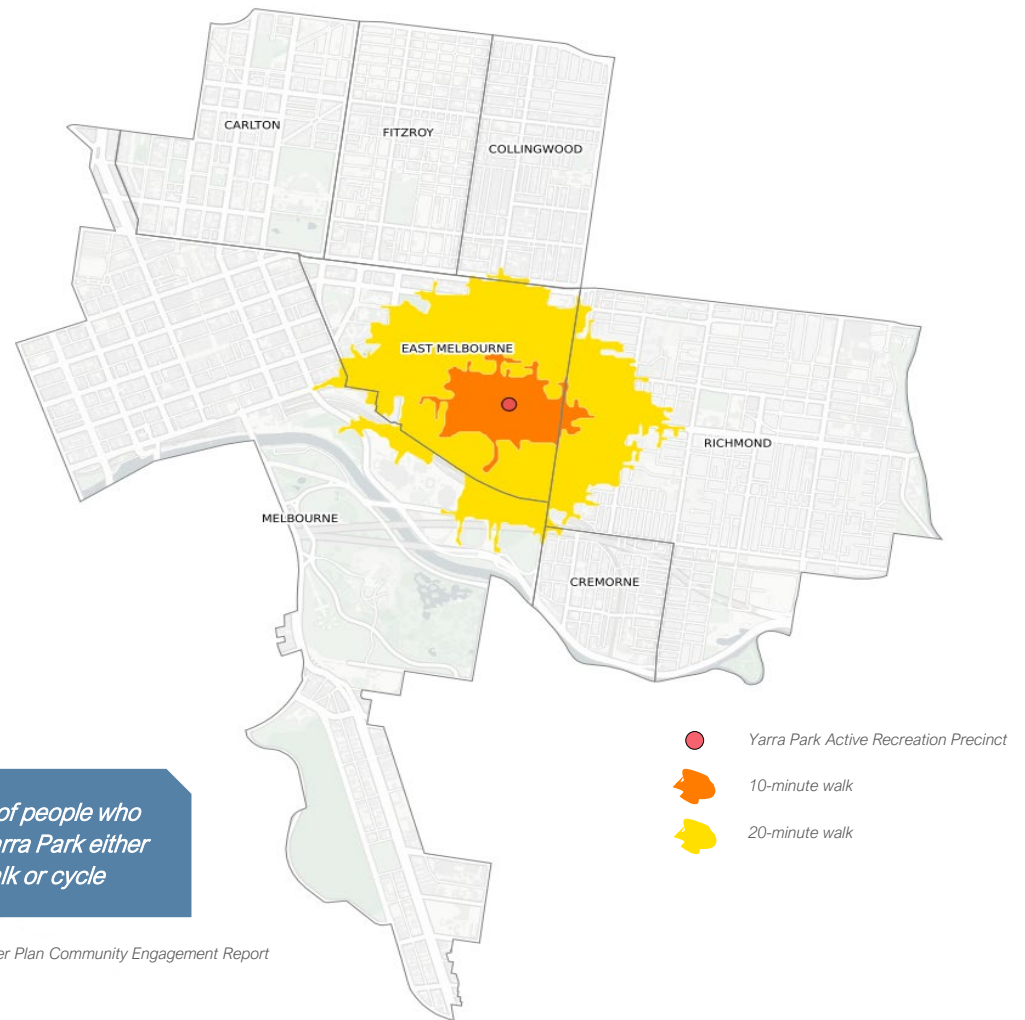
2021 ABS Census Data indicates a population of more than 124,000 people living within the broader catchment, which has a mix of high density and residential housing and a significant shortfall of recreational spaces. The diverse communities within the catchment also represent a broad spectrum of characteristics, cultures, ages and abilities.

An analysis of Vic Future and Forecast id data indicates the population within the catchment will increase to 195,000 in 2031 and more than 211,00 by 2036. This is an additional 70,778 people by 2031 and 87,280 by 2036 that will require access to quality open space and active recreation facilities.

In most suburbs in the catchment, the population to 2031 shows significant growth within the older age cohort of 70+. It is anticipated that by 2031 there will be 11,655 older adults aged 70+, an additional 4,689. This level of growth supports the need to provide appropriate intergenerational facilities that are safe and accessible by older adults.

It is assumed that most people who use the Active Recreation Precinct on nonevent days live nearby and walk to the site. The adjacent map provides a 10 minute and 20-minute walking catchment which directly services residents living in East Melbourne and the West Richmond.

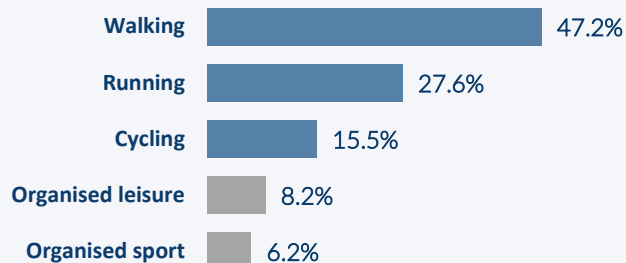
The following page provides a summary of active recreation participation in the City of Melbourne and community feedback relating to the existing Active Recreation Precinct.



# City of Melbourne Active Recreation Snapshot

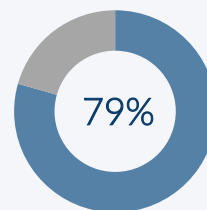


## Activity Type Comparison<sup>1</sup>

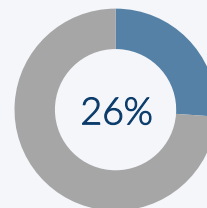


## Active Recreation Indicators

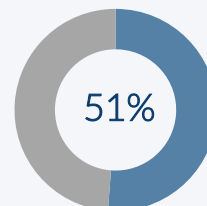
Participates in weekly non-organised physical activity<sup>1</sup>



Participates in weekly organised physical activity<sup>1</sup>



Meets Australian Physical Activity Guidelines<sup>2</sup>



## What could be improved / introduced

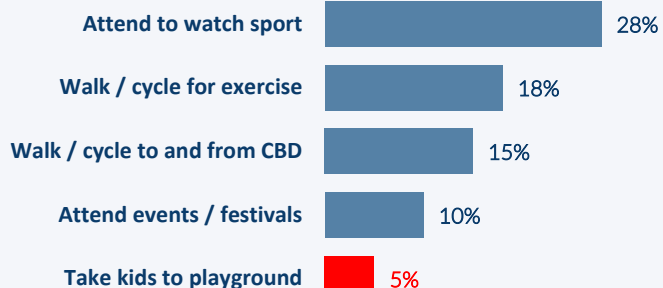
### Yarra Park Master Plan workshop feedback

- Improve lighting
- Playground and recreational equipment
- Provide a running circuit
- More toilets in the right location
- Increase use for active recreation –
  - Running tracks
  - Junior sports, soccer, basketball
  - Multi-purpose courts/spaces

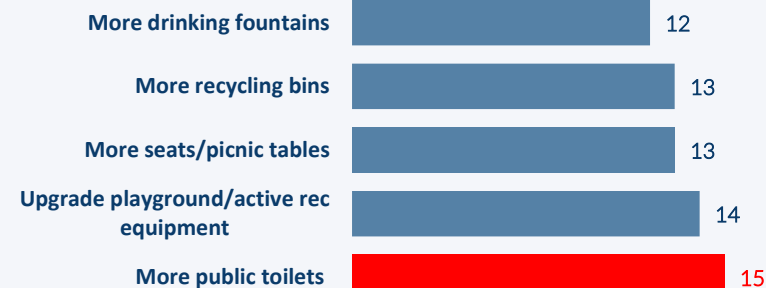
## Online Survey (441 responses)



## Reasons for visiting Yarra Park



## Ranked improvement ideas (Parkland & Amenity Theme)<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup>VicHealth. (2015). VicHealth Indicators Survey 2015 Results.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Health and Human Services Victoria. (2017). Victorian Population Health Survey 2017.

<sup>3</sup>The Parkland and Amenity theme includes active recreation.

# FACILITIES REVIEW

An audit of facilities and equipment within the Active Recreation Precinct was undertaken to capture provision, condition and functional information. Key findings from the audit have assisted in shaping report recommendations.

Facilities are generally well kept and safe to use. Site access, soft lighting and signage are all considered reasonably appropriate for the precinct based on the type and level of use.

The playground and other active recreation components lack variety and have only moderate play value. Since 2013 the focus has been on improving the social amenities through the provision of additional picnic facilities. Only minor improvements have been made to the playground and basketball / netball court.

Apart from converting the surface from grass to gravel, there has been no expansion of the precinct footprint or major upgrades to facilities in the last 10 years. The playground, active recreation facilities and social amenities were all given a rating based on their overall condition, value and functionality. A traffic light system was used to rate each component as per the table below and are shown on the adjacent images.

| Rating                                      | Indicator |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Excellent (as new)                          |           |
| Good (remaining lifespan 10+ years)         |           |
| Average (improvements necessary)            |           |
| Poor (below best practice upgrade required) |           |

## PLAYGROUND ASSESSMENT



### Summary

Local level community playground with equipment for toddlers and older primary school aged children. The playground has a sports theme with football and cricket scoreboards and cricket and football shaped springers.

### Issues

Aging equipment that lacks variety and no dedicated equipment for older adults. No dedicated toilet facility.

## ACTIVE RECREATION FACILITIES



### Summary

Half circle shaped concrete pad with one basketball ring and backboard and one netball ring. Provides opportunity for social games and practice.

### Issues

Basketball backboard is well worn. Gravel encroaching onto the concrete pad which is impacting use. No dedicated toilet facility.

## SOCIAL AMENITIES



### Summary

Social amenities include barbeque facilities, multiple sets of park furniture, drinking fountain and shade trees.

### Issues

Limited shelters / undercover areas and no dedicated toilet facility to support social gatherings and family outings.

# SITE CONSIDERATIONS

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## Facility provision

Introducing new active recreation facilities in Yarra Park will require careful consideration to ensure siting, use, and impact of co-locating with existing facilities is maximised.

Development of a multipurpose active recreation node can be delivered as shared spaces that provide participation opportunities for a greater cross-section of the community. Multipurpose nodes will create efficiencies in the use of space, surfaces, facility components and supporting infrastructure.

Building on the existing provision is considered a key opportunity. Co-locating new active recreation facilities with other activity options such as play spaces will expand the intergenerational reach of Yarra Park and create more opportunities for incidental physical activity.

The Yarra Park Active Recreation Precinct has capacity to draw use from beyond a local catchment - subject to facility upgrades and appropriate supporting infrastructure that allows for extended duration of stay. This should include a public toilet and additional park furniture, parking, lighting and drinking fountains. Access to a public toilet at key active recreation sites in high traffic areas is required to support increased patronage.

Universal design and gender equity principles should be applied to the future planning and development of the precinct to ensure that barriers to participation are removed or minimised.

## Paths and trails

While this study is focused on facilities within the Active Recreation Precinct, the provision of a connected and accessible active transport network is vital for increasing physical activity via walking, cycling and running.

The community engagement process undertaken as part of the Yarra Park Master Plan identified path improvements for pedestrians and cyclists as the top ranked improvement idea.

Safety and conflict between cyclists and pedestrians was raised as a key issue during the community engagement process. Strategies to address this issue will need to be identified to support the implementation of the Yarra Park Master Plan.

Access to active recreation opportunities in close proximity to home is a key influence on participation. The ongoing improvement of the active transport network should be a priority to ensure access to active recreation is maximised.

The provision of safe circuit paths with distance markers will be important to encourage walking and running destinations, particularly for adults and older adults.

## Activation

Our involvement in several Council based Active Recreation Strategies has provided key insights into the range of factors that influence active recreation participation behavior. These include:

- Convenience and proximity of active recreation facilities to home is a key factor.
- Affordability is a barrier to physical activity. Free and convenient active recreation opportunities are seen as a way to improve access.
- Active recreation sites should provide convenient access to walking, fitness and diverse activity options.
- Prioritising safety and accessibility during facility design will encourage and support participation by women and girls.
- Supporting infrastructure such as toilets, shade and park furniture are important to extending the length of stay, as well as encouraging less active people to visit parks.
- The diversity of active recreation opportunities is important to encouraging new participants to be active.
- Providing facilities that cater for a range of age cohorts will encourage intergenerational participation and increase participation for an ageing community.

# DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Based on the research and evidence collected during this project, the following development options for upgrading the Active Recreation Precinct should be considered:

- Develop an intergenerational recreation facility that promotes physical activity and social connection, is a place of destination and caters for a range of age groups.

The key components of an intergenerational recreation facility may include:

- A regional play space designed for all ages and abilities including young children, tweens, teens and older adults.
- Multiple acrylic hard courts to accommodate a range of activities including basketball, netball and futsal.
- A formal fitness loop through Yarra Park which starts and stops at the Active Recreation Precinct - with appropriate signage and distance markers
- Installation of a bike maintenance hub to compliment the active transport loop and a dedicated bike parking area.
- Additional picnic shelters, tables, seats, barbecues, drinking fountains, lighting and shaded areas.
- DDA compliant all gender toilet / changing places facility (within 50m)

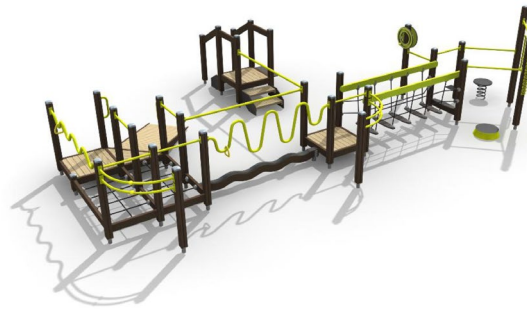
The above development options would require an expansion and redevelopment of the existing Active Recreation Space to accommodate all components.



*Sample – Regional play space*



*Sample - bicycle repair station / maintenance hub*



*Sample – Seniors exercise equipment targeting older adults*



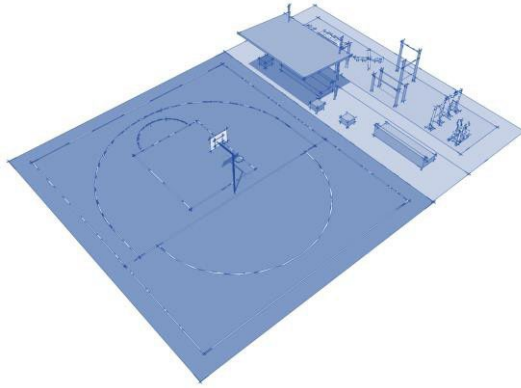
*Sample – Restroom / changing places facility*

# MULTIPURPOSE ACTIVE RECREATION

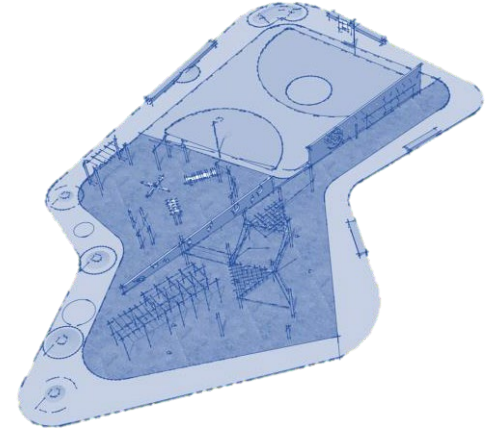
The delivery of a multipurpose active recreation precinct is a key recommendation in this report and should be considered the preferred method of active recreation facility development. The design of these spaces require consideration of:

- Appropriate scale of facilities for the site.
- Diversity of facilities in relation to other sites in close proximity.
- Use of 'unique attractors' and new facility components.
- Impact of existing use and neighbouring properties.
- Passive surveillance and implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles
- Supporting infrastructure.
- Connections to the site, including active transport and public transport.

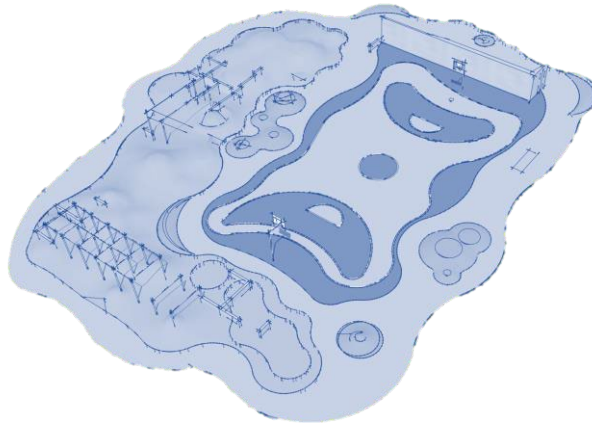
The adjacent images are sample designs of multipurpose active recreation precincts.



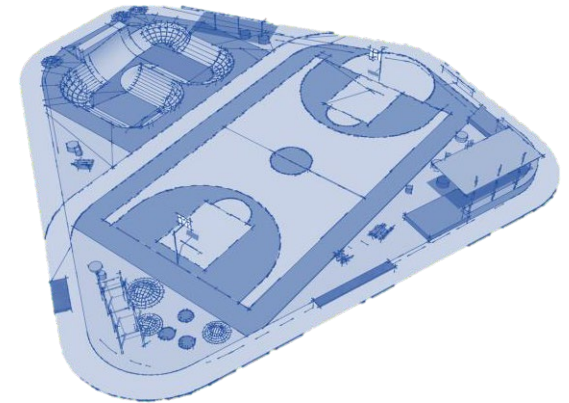
*Sample – Regional play equipment with basketball / netball court*



*Sample - bicycle repair station / maintenance hub*



*Sample – Seniors exercise equipment targeting older adults*



*Sample – Restroom / changing places facility*

# YARRA PARK MASTER PLAN 2025

The Yarra Park Master Plan 2025 has adopted the recommendations of this report.

Under the Parkland and Amenity theme, an opportunity called 'Northern Recreation Space' has been included. It proposes upgrades to the existing Active Recreation Precinct:

*Provision of upgrades for the northern recreational space including new universally accessible play equipment, picnic facilities, outdoor fitness equipment, bicycle and wheelchair maintenance hub, and a public amenities block (including accessible, all gender toilet). The facilities should cater to users of all ages and access requirements, providing an intergenerational facility.*

In addition to the above opportunity, the Master Plan also includes opportunities that revolve around improving safety, including by upgrading pathways and lighting. The 'pathways' opportunity aims to ensure that they are "universally accessible, providing step free, smoother surfaces and appropriate gradients and transitions". The 'Night-time Strategy' opportunity aims to enhance "the experience for all users along key pathways to increase visibility and improve perceptions of safety during night-time hours".

These opportunities will contribute to making Yarra Park a safer space. Creating a safer space will positively influence active recreation participation.



