



INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS PUTS THE SPOTLIGHT ON GREEN URBAN SPACES

The impact of urban growth on our parks and recreation and overall liveability and sustainability will be the focus of the International Parks and Leisure Congress (IPLC) 2018 being held in Melbourne from October 14-17.

Co-hosted by World Urban Parks and Parks and Leisure Australia, 'Future of Spaces and Places in Cities' will put the spotlight on the importance of green urban spaces and discuss how government, urban planners and parks and recreation professionals can respond to ensure our open spaces, health and wellbeing are protected at a time of increasing urban density.

More than half (55 per cent) of the world's population now live in urban areas. By 2050, that figure will have risen to 68 per cent or 6.5 billion people - two-thirds of all humanity.

The rapid growth of cities in the developing world, coupled with increasing rural to urban migration, has also led to a boom in mega-cities. In 1990, there were ten mega-cities with 10 million inhabitants or more. There are now more than 30 mega-cities, home to more than 450 million people and the UN predicts there will be 43 megacities by 2030.

Sustainable development and liveability in these urban areas cannot be achieved without significantly transforming the way we build and manage our urban spaces.

The 'Future of Spaces and Places in Cities' brings together hundreds of delegates from across the globe and from all levels of industry - from government and academia to researchers, urban planners and parks and recreation professionals, including some of the world's most innovative thinkers and playmakers.

Guest speakers include British explorer and geographer Daniel Raven-Ellison, who is campaigning to make London the world's first national park city. As founder of the Greater London National Park City initiative, Raven-Ellison, with the backing of London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, wants London to be physically greener with more wildlife and to be viewed as an ecological centre as well as a political, cultural and financial one.

Also addressing the congress is Gil Penalosa, the founder and chair of the board of internationally-recognised non-profit organisation, 80 Cities, which was created on the simple philosophy that if you create a great city for an eight-year-old and an 80-year-old, you will create a successful city for all people. Gil's transformation of the park system in Bogota (Colombia) during the 1990s is still considered an exemplar of sustainable urban design and development.

World Urban Parks Chief Executive, Neil McCarthy said it was fitting that such an important congress was being held in a city voted the world's most liveable for seven years running.

"Urban parks are central to the future of the world's liveability and so to be able to bring world leaders and experts together, here in Melbourne, which is famous for its liveability is a unique and important opportunity to explore our cities futures," he said.

"It is also a unique opportunity to explore and understand some of the world's most innovative and exciting ideas from the London National Parks City concept to the creation of 'dark sky parks' for health, environmental and astro-tourism benefits."

Parks and Leisure Australia President, Martin Lambert said "we are extremely proud to be partnering with World Urban Parks to host this major international Congress, which will bring together some of the brightest and most innovative minds to share their thoughts, ideas, research and best practice to help ensure parks, sport and recreation infrastructure remain an integral part of our cities in a time of unprecedented urban growth and density."

"The future of our cities depends upon the people who plan and provide sport and recreation spaces and places in those cities to ensure the social, physical, mental and ecological health of our communities," he said.

The International Parks and Leisure Congress (IPLC) will be held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground from October 14-17.

Guest speakers are available for interview and include:

Gil Penalosa, 8-80 Cities, Canada - Gil is passionate about cities for all people and advises decision makers and communities on how to create vibrant cities and healthy communities for everyone regardless of age, gender and social, economic or ethnic background. His focus is on the design and use of parks and streets as great public spaces, as well as sustainable mobility.

Daniel Raven-Ellison, National Geographic, UK - Daniel is a guerilla geographer, National Geographic explorer and founder of the initiative to transform the whole of Greater London into the world's first National Park City in 2019.

Mitchell Silver, New York City Parks Commissioner, USA - Mitchell Silver is the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and the immediate past president of the American Planning Association (APA). An award-winning planner with over 30 years' experience, he is internationally recognised for his leadership in the planning profession and his contributions to contemporary planning and urban design issues.

In 2017, Commissioner Silver was elected to Planetizen's list of the 100 Most Influential Urbanists in the world.

Susan Alberti, Parks and Leisure Australia Ambassador - As former President of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, former Vice President of the Western Bulldogs and the inaugural ambassador of the AFL's national women's competition (AFLW) in 2017, Susan understands the importance of grass roots sport and the importance of parks and open spaces in developing happy, healthy and prosperous communities.

Other speakers include:

- Dr Julia Miranda London, Deputy Chair International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas, Columbia
- Bishop Ngobeli, Johannesburg Parks Commissioner, South Africa
- Jayne Miller, President, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, USA
- Karen Keenleyside, Vice Chair People and Parks, Canada
- Dr Melanie Davern, Co-director, Healthy Livable Cities Group, USA
- Liliana D'Ambrosio, Victorian Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
- Jason Fox, leadership advisor
- Margaret Garmley, Office of Public Works, Ireland

For a full program, visit: <https://www.iplc2018.com/program/>

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