Who visits the Lake Claremont public open space and what are those visitors doing?

Lake Claremont is a significant Conservation Category wetland located approximately 10 km southwest of the CBD of Perth, Western Australia. Lake Claremont is a medium-sized, mixed-use public open space (POS) comprising 60 hectares. Significant revegetation and restoration efforts by the Town of Claremont and the Friends of Lake Claremont community group have improved the indigenous biodiversity and general amenity value of the POS over the past 10 years.

In the 2016–17 Austral summer, Murdoch University surveyed 423 visitors to Lake Claremont. Thoroughly understanding the user demographics of an urban POS, such as Lake Claremont, is important when attempting to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Methods and results

A self-report pen and paper survey was undertaken at Lake Claremont, over seven surveying events between December 2016 and February 2017. Participants comprised 242 females (57%), 161 males (38%), and 20 participants (5%) who gender identified as ‘other’. This gender distribution differs from local and regional demographic data (Figure 1). The data suggests there could be specific factors drawing more females than males to Lake Claremont.

The most common age range of participants was 45–54 years (26%), followed by 65+ years (25%). The age distribution of participants also differs from the local and regional demographic data and again there could be aspects of the site (or the immediate surrounds) drawing an older population to visit.

Most visitors (n = 381; 90%) reported travelling less than 5 km to visit the Lake Claremont site. Of the 25% of visitors from outside the local area (Figure 2), 86 visitors (22.5%) were visiting from 48 other suburbs across the Perth Metropolitan Area, 14 (3%) from other parts of Australia, and five (1.5%) were international visitors. A general assertion may be made that the farther individuals are willing to travel to a site, the stronger the correlation of high value and satisfaction held for the site.

 Based on the demographic information collected in the survey, the most common user of Lake Claremont is identified as a female, between the ages of 45–54 who has travelled less than 5 km to the site.

Consistent with other studies on public open space, 28% of surveyed POS users were visiting Lake Claremont for the exercise opportunity the site provides (Figure 3) and 14% of users come to Lake Claremont due to other reasons.
Claremont to relax. Connecting with nature was also a drawcard, with viewing flora and fauna accounting for 18% of visitor activity. Exercising dogs on and off lead (22%) is also a major visitor activity.

Conclusions and recommendations
The mix of natural and anthropogenic values, high patronage, and inner-city location, combine to make Lake Claremont a valuable community asset and important location for researching city liveability. Understanding the demographics of public open space visitors is valuable to the Town of Claremont on several levels:

1. Ensuring the strategic direction and future planning of the public open space by the land owner/manager is aligned and congruent with site users;
2. Assessing proposals for infrastructure installations, upgrades, removal and prioritisation.
3. Assessing maintenance/operating budgets and their ability to service the needs and desires of the site users.

More information
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References
2. Parker, J. A survey of park user perception in the context of green space and city liveability: Lake Claremont, Western Australia. MSc thesis, Murdoch University.

FIGURE 3 Rates of visitor participation at the Lake Claremont POS