

Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk

(formerly Bellarine Basin)

Draft concept plan

Community engagement report

April to May 2023

Executive Summary

Background

Barwon Water is embarking on a project to transform our former Bellarine Basin site into more than 30 hectares of environmental and public open space to be enjoyed by the community for years to come.

The environmental and community place planned at the corner of Grubb and Swan Bay roads has been named Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk, meaning 'headwaters of continuous flowing river' in Wadawurrung language.

With co-funding from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (formerly Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning), we rehabilitated the Bellarine Basin and restored the natural headwaters of Yarram Creek in 2022.

We want to transform the site into an area that enhances the unique and natural features of the Bellarine Peninsula so that it becomes a place people, birds and native animals can enjoy for generations to come.

As part of our commitment to genuine and ongoing engagement, we are undertaking a three-step engagement process for input on the site design and future use. This broadly consisted of:

- development of a vision statement, project principles and objectives (completed in September 2021)
- consideration of activities that will be accommodated on the site (completed March 2022)
- development of a concept plan before we finalise a (landscape) masterplan and project plan for the site (current phase).

Following this three-step community engagement process there will be opportunities for the community to join us in delivering some of the initiatives, to develop and maintain the site in accordance with the vision, principles and objectives for the site.

Feedback summary

90 community members provided feedback from 11 April to 10 May 2023 on the draft concept plan. The plan was developed in collaboration with our agency advisory group – which includes Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation; Department of Energy, Environment, Climate Action; Corangamite Catchment Management Authority; and City of Greater Geelong.

We promoted the feedback opportunities broadly to ensure inclusive engagement. The feedback outlined in this report provides a snapshot of the community sentiment at the time. In general, the responses were very supportive of the draft concept plan and environmental and cultural education centre. Further detail is provided below.

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Introduction

This report outlines the approach and outcomes from the community and stakeholder engagement process during April and May 2023. It includes analysis of the feedback received on the Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk (formerly Bellarine Basin) project.

Engagement approach

Current engagement phase

The stage three consultation phase on the proposed concept plan ran from Wednesday 12 April to Wednesday 10 May 2023. This included working together with the local community and our agency advisory group, consisting of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA, formerly DELWP) Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, and City of Greater Geelong, to develop the draft concept plan and host a survey for the public to have their say on the plan.

Previous engagement phase

The stage two consultation phase on site uses and activities finished on 14 March 2022. This included working together with our agency advisory group to develop a list of proposed site uses and activities. These were then collated into a survey for the public to share their thoughts on what the advisory group had proposed. The survey results informed the concept plan of the site, which the community shared their feedback on as part of the stage three consultation phase.

Engagement limitations

All engagement processes have limitations. The following limitations were identified for this project:

- The findings section describes results as a 'majority' response where there is 70% or higher selecting the same response.
- The public site tours were limited to a small section of the site to ensure safety and accessibility for everyone, as the site and walking paths have not yet been developed. This meant we were unable to show community members the site in its entirety, and community members relied on concept plans and images to inform their feedback on certain elements of the site.

Approach

This section outlines the approach to designing and delivering the engagement, the engagement objectives, the scope of discussion and a summary of the activities.

Engagement objectives

- To continue working with our advisory committee and the local community to seek feedback on a concept plan for the site, which will inform the masterplan for the rehabilitated site.
- To promote the draft concept plan and associated survey to ensure the community is made aware of the plan and their opportunity to provide feedback.
- To determine the level of support for the concept plan.
- To determine the level of support for the education centre.

Overview of engagement activities

To promote the concept plan and associated survey, we ran advertisements in local newspapers, issued a media release and sent emails to our database of project subscribers, school and community groups. Geo-targeted Facebook and Instagram advertising was also undertaken to reach the local community. Below is an example of the Facebook ads:

Barwon Water
Published by Brandwatch · 19 April ·

Barwon Water is transforming its former Bellarine Basin site now known as Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk into more than 30 hectares of environmental and public open space 🌱 to be enjoyed by the community for years to come.

You're invited to tour Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk (which means 'headwaters of continuous flowing river') to see the progress of the future community space.

You'll have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the project.

📍 Where: Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk, corner of Grubb and Swan Bay roads, Wallington

🕒 When: Saturday 29 April at 10 am and 12 pm

📧 RSVPs are essential as we have limited spots per time slot. Please email projects@barwonwater.vic.gov.au with your preferred time.

We hope to see you there!

For more information and to have your say on the project, visit: 📄
<https://fal.cn/3xwLW>

#murrkngubityarramyaluk #openspace #communityspace #openday #environment #community

Site tours
Saturday 29 April

Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk

See Insights and Ads Boost Unavailable

Barwon Water
Published by Brandwatch · 27 April ·

Have your say on the concept plan for Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk!

We want to transform the former Bellarine Basin site into an area that enhances the unique and natural features of the Bellarine Peninsula so that it becomes a place people, birds 🐦 and native animals can enjoy for generations to come.

Following extensive engagement with Traditional Owners, community and key stakeholders, we have developed a draft concept plan to demonstrate what the layout and activities could look like.

To view the concept plan and have your say, please visit 📄 <https://fal.cn/3xLen>

Feedback on the draft plan closes on Wednesday 10 May.

PS. A big thank you to everyone who has booked in to visit Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk this coming Saturday! All sessions have now been filled.

Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk

Have your say
and help us reimagine this space

See Insights and Ads Boost post

Participation

This section outlines who participated in the activities.

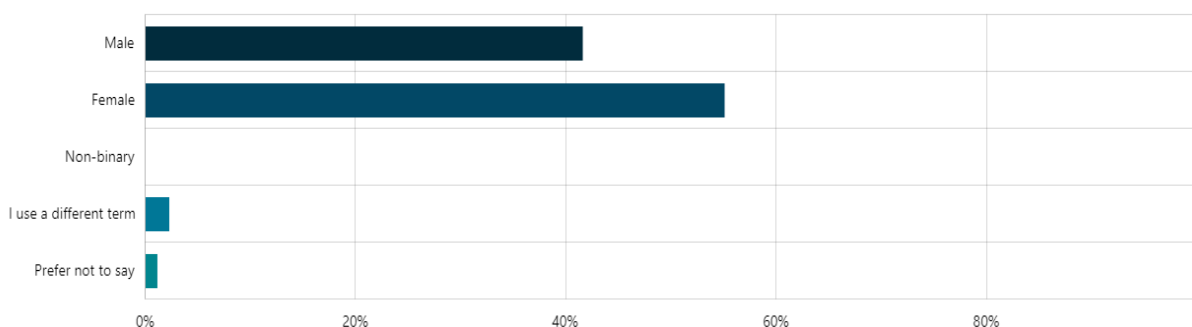
Participant overview

- The Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk 'Your Say' web page had 1,226 visits between 1 April and 31 May, 2023.
- The Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Yaluk web page on Barwon Water's corporate website had 639 visits between 1 April to 31 May.
- Eight meetings were held on site, including a dedicated tour for neighbours, three public site tours and four agency advisory group meetings.
- The number of questions answered in the concept plan survey was 11.
- Two email marketing campaigns (eDMs) were sent to project subscribers to promote the site tours and the survey. Of the 166 recipients of the 13 April 2023 eDM, 116 people opened it and 23 clicked through to the landing page. Of the 199 recipients of the 8 May 2023 eDM, 143 opened it and 27 clicked through to the landing page.
- The social media campaign performed well, with the Facebook posts reaching 1,140 and 1,870 people respectively. The initial post generated 38 reactions, comments and shares, and the follow up post resulted in 44. Over 40 Facebook users clicked through to the web page to learn more or share feedback.

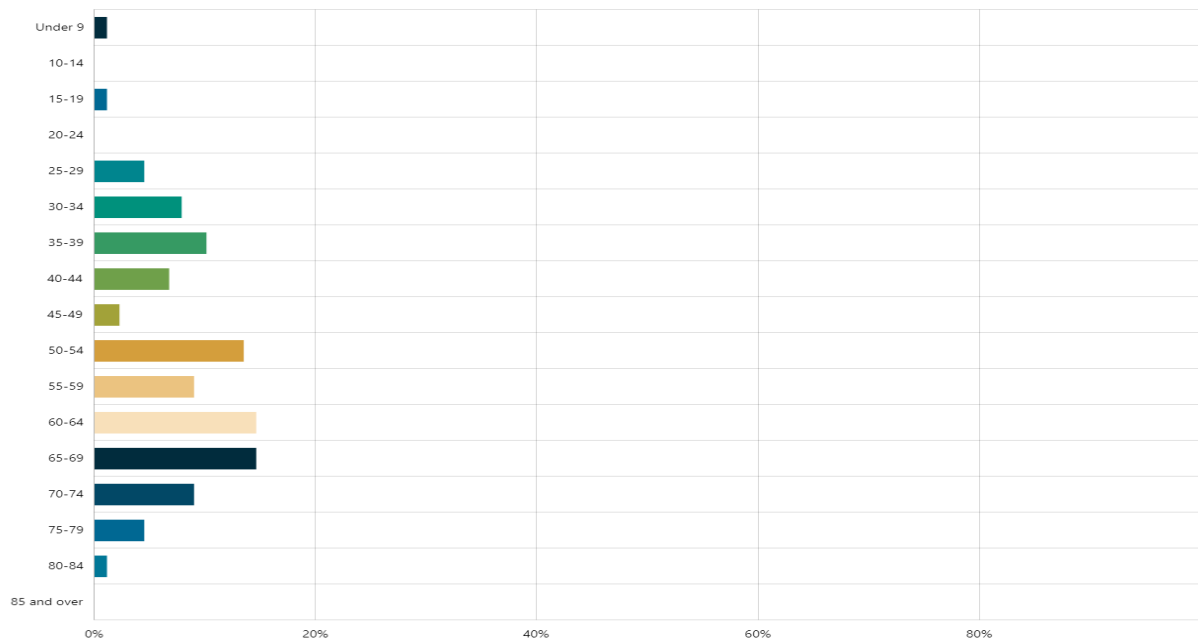
Who we heard from

The following graphs provide an overview of demographics for survey respondents.

Please indicate your gender:



Please select your age group:



Please share your postal code:

32% of respondents were from 3226 Ocean Grove	27% of respondents were from 3222 Clifton Springs, Curlewis, Drysdale, Mannerim, Marcus Hill, Wallington	13% of respondents were from 3223 Bellarine, Indented Head, Portarlington, St Leonards	7% of respondents were from 3224 Leopold, Moolap
7% of respondents were from 3225 Point Lonsdale, Queenscliff, Swan Bay, Swan Island	2% of respondents were from 3217 Armstrong Creek, Charlemont, Freshwater Creek, Mount Duneed	2% of respondents were from 3216 Belmont, Grovedale, Grovedale East, Highton, Marshall, Wandana Heights, Waurin Ponds	1% of respondents were from 3227 Barwon Heads, Breamlea, Connewarre
1% of respondents were from 3228 Bellbrae, Bells Beach, Jan Juc, Torquay	1% of respondents were from 3242 Birregurra	1% of respondents were from 3029 Hoppers Crossing, Tarneit, Truganina	6% of respondents were from Other

Findings

Overall the feedback captured from survey respondents was highly positive. Respondents were both satisfied with the draft plans and supportive of the environmental and cultural education centre.

"The range and the variety of trails and friendly accessible spaces will encourage both locals and tourists to visit and spend time appreciating the biodiversity of the Bellarine" – Survey response

"I think this is a fantastic initiative and look forward to the development of the site for our community benefit and flora and fauna wildlife." – Survey response

"As an avid bird watcher it will be a great asset and I will visit often." – Survey response

Respondents appear enthusiastic about the site's plans, particularly the environmental and recreation opportunities the plans outline. The feedback has been summarised based on responses to:

- Overall feedback on the draft concept plan
- Inclusion of an environmental and cultural education centre
- The design and use of the centre
- Information and stories to be included at navigation points
- Other considerations for the detailed plans.

Feedback on the draft concept plan

The survey asked respondents to share their overall satisfaction with the draft concept plan. Figure 1 shows respondents were overall satisfied (83%, very satisfied and satisfied) with the draft concept plan. Only 5% expressed that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The survey asked respondents to provide a reason for their response. **Figure 2** illustrates the themes that emerged across respondents' answers. Some responses covered multiple themes. The sentiment of comments was a mix of overall support and improvement opportunities. Environmental opportunities were the most common theme (38%), followed by recreational activities (22%) and design of space (18%). The following pages summarise the responses under each of the themes.

The respondents who were dissatisfied with the concept plan shared feedback that the space should be used for more active recreation – such as play equipment and concerts – and enhanced wildlife corridors connecting to other habitats on the Bellarine.

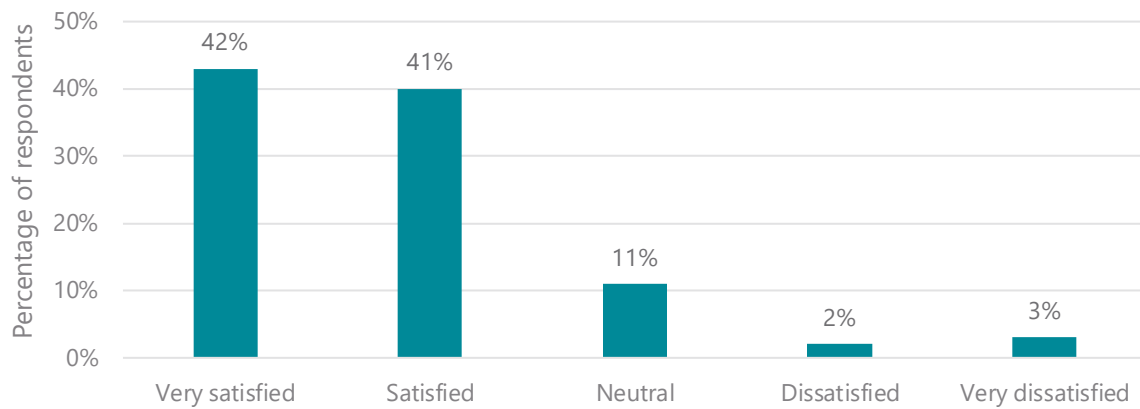


Figure 1. Respondents' satisfaction level for the draft concept plan (n=90)

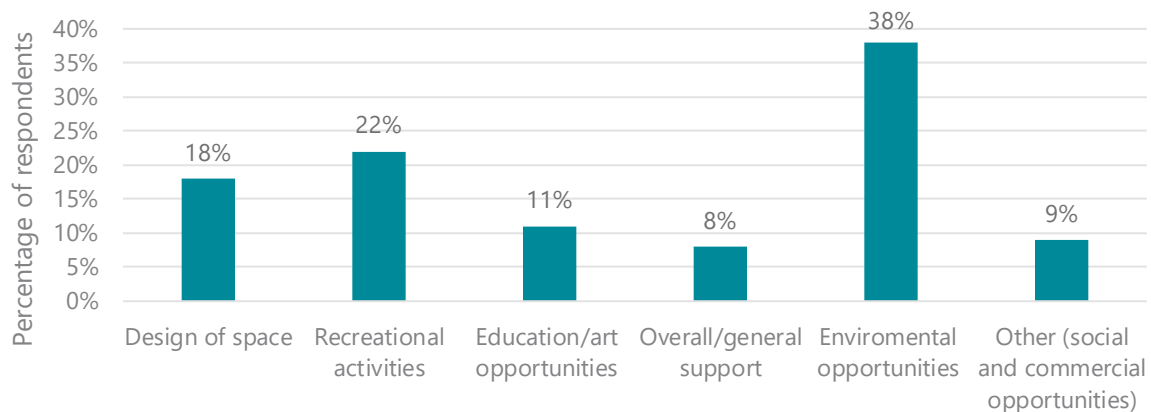


Figure 2. Reason for respondents' response (n=90)

Environmental Opportunities

Respondents overwhelmingly supported habitat restoration for native animals and felt biodiversity had been strongly considered for the site. Many respondents felt optimistic that the vegetation chosen would encourage native animals and support breeding areas during nesting season. Respondents also described how the plans had a good balance of habitat restoration and public access. Several respondents described how the plans would add great value to the area and a desire for similar quality green spaces around the Bellarine peninsula.

"The focus on protecting the native flora, specifically that which is endemic to the area looks really promising." – Survey response

"The development of wetlands will add an important link in the network of Bellarine wetlands which are vital to indigenous and migratory birdlife." – Survey response

Regarding environmental opportunities for improvement, comments sought to encourage specific animals through habitat creation (e.g. wader birds, koalas, kookaburras, reptiles etc.). Respondents also emphasised the importance of habitat connectivity to surrounding areas (e.g. corridors for migratory species, genetic and species flow). Respondents, while supportive of the inclusion of native plants, felt that the plants should be endemic to the region, not just Victoria.

There were also a couple of queries relating to canopy cover and whether the Ecological Vegetation Classes were a guide for the site development.

Recreational Activities

Comments received under the theme of recreational activities were a mix of support and questions seeking greater clarity around the plans. Several respondents highlighted opportunities for bird watching, walking and picnics. Several respondents sought clarification on bike access and the use of trails.

Opportunities for improvement included more bike trails and that bike access to the site to be considered part of the plans.

"Would like to see a safer access from Grubb Road, with walking and cycling access to the site being part of the master plan." – Survey response

Design of space

Respondents emphasised accessible spaces as an improvement opportunity. Several recommendations related to pathway and bathroom accessibility to ensure inclusive spaces for people living with a disability and people with prams. Other recommendations included seating at regular intervals, inclusive signage, lighting (reducing anti-social behaviour), and parking.

Concerns about waste disposal and maintenance were raised, especially with the area's anticipated foot traffic (including picnics). Respondents expressed mixed levels of support regarding dogs being allowed on the site. Some respondents felt dog access was integral to their desire to use the space. In contrast, others were concerned about the threat to native wildlife.

"Maybe have a paved pathway for people in wheelchairs and pram to enjoy" – Survey response

Education/Art Opportunities

Respondents expressed support for the educational opportunities. Respondents perceived the regeneration of native plants, alongside habitat restoration a useful educational resource. They identified signage as important for learning about native species and walking trails.

"Good involvement of First Nations people and therefore hopefully a considerable source of information about the area and its related considerations (air, sky, water)" – Survey response

Respondents also indicated that the history of the Wadawurrung people and the inclusion of caring for Country principles were valuable educational opportunities, particularly for younger generations. Respondents highlighted their satisfaction with the Traditional Owner engagement and a desire for ongoing engagement with Wadawurrung.

"Community connect and learn from the original custodians of how best to care and nurture our local environment" – Survey response

Other recommendations

Most of the other comments related to social and commercial opportunities. There were a couple of recommendations for including playground equipment in addition to nature play.

Other recommendations mainly focused on logistics and ongoing management of the site, including how the site would be managed and the whether there would be a volunteer committee.

Other recommendations for the site included a running track, elevated cycleway, suspended walk bridge, lookout tower, beehive centre, and basketball court. One respondent also noted the need to consider the privacy of neighbouring properties.

Inclusion of an environmental and cultural education centre

The survey asked respondents to identify their level of support for including an environmental and cultural education centre. As shown in Figure 3, most respondents support an environmental and cultural education centre, with 81% (73) stating strongly support or support.

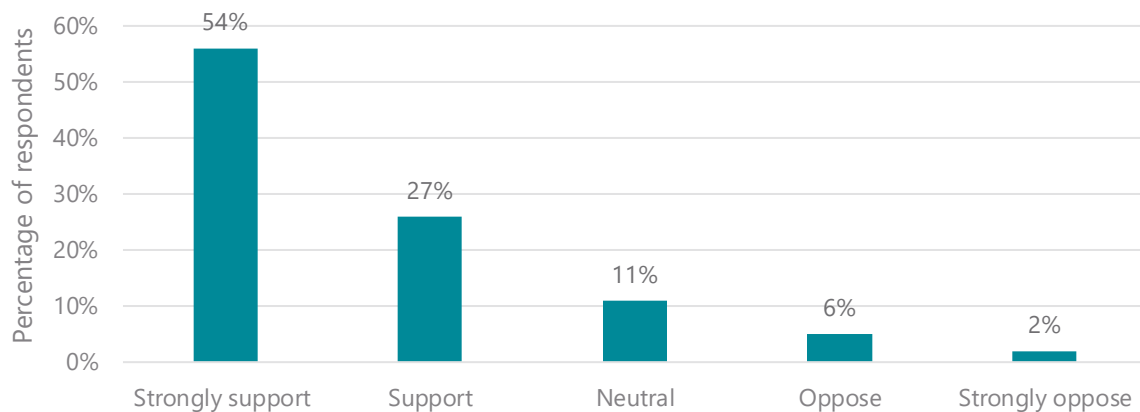


Figure 3. Respondents' level of support for the inclusion of an environmental and cultural education centre (n=90)

The survey asked respondents to provide a reason for their response. Respondents who supported the inclusion of an environmental and cultural education centre stated that it would be an opportunity for both children and adults to learn about the site's natural environment and cultural heritage. Respondents shared that interactive learning experiences at the education centre would help raise awareness for environmental protection. Several respondents thought the centre would be a starting point for people to learn about Aboriginal culture and history.

"I see it as an educational tool for local community as well as visitors to the region. The more we understand ecosystems the better we can protect them.." – Survey response

"I see it can become a destination for environmental education and provides something for all ages." – Survey response

Respondents who oppose including an environmental and cultural education centre thought local visitors would not utilise it. Some respondents would prefer budget and resources be allocated to installing other facilities and amenities such as picnic tables, barbeques, toilets, and playgrounds at the site.

"I see it can become a destination for environmental education and provides something for all ages." – Survey response

Design and use of the centre

The survey asked respondents to share any other thoughts on the centre's design and use. Outlined below are the common themes that emerged from the responses.

Sustainable design – Respondents would like architectural designs that blend with the surrounding natural environment using sustainable materials. Respondents would prefer the centre to be energy efficient and use renewable energy. A few respondents suggested including designs that prevent invasive animals such as foxes and rabbits from entering the site.

"The building should support international best standards for materials used, energy, waste and water design." – Survey response

Accessible and inclusive design – Respondents emphasised that the centre should be accessible to all visitors, including people with disability. Specific suggestions included having pram-friendly access and information boards that are easy to understand.

"I would like to emphasise the importance of the reserve being welcoming to all and that the trails be accessible to all as much as possible." – Survey response

Transport and parking – Respondents would like sufficient parking spaces and charging stations for electric vehicles. Respondents want to see other public and active transport options to get to the site considered, including bus services, walking and bike lanes connected to the centre.

Spaces to gather and meet – Respondents stated that the centre should provide spaces for large groups such as schools and community groups. Local community groups could also use the spaces to gather and meet. Basic equipment such as kitchens, toilets, and projectors should be provided.

Guided tours and workshops – Respondents would like to see regular guided tours and workshops at the centre to introduce the area's environment, culture, and history. Respondents suggested collaborating with local community groups and Aboriginal groups, such as Friends of Ocean Grove and Murrk Ngubiti Yarram Yaluk Friends Association, to design and deliver these events.

Information and stories to be included at navigation points

Respondents shared multiple ideas about information and stories they would like to see included at navigation points at the centre, including:

- biodiversity in Bellarine Peninsula
- identification of local flora and fauna
- changes to the environment and ecosystem in different seasons
- water cycles of the site
- history of the local area
- how Aboriginal peoples took care of the land and used native plants in the area
- stories shared by Aboriginal people
- tips for caring for the local natural environment.

"The importance of Indigenous vegetation and wildlife and the way they interact with each other." – Survey response

"Field guides related to the flora and fauna present (or likely to be) at different locations and habitats would be really useful." – Survey response

"An emphasis on First Nations peoples knowledge and expertise on land management, conservation, specifically flood and bush fire prevention and increasing biodiversity." – Survey response

Other considerations for the detailed plans

The survey asked respondents to share anything else they think should be considered in the detailed plan for the overall space. Respondents tended to use this opportunity to reiterate early points made in their responses. The following points summarise the responses:

Dogs and pets access – Respondents had mixed views on whether pets should have access to the site. Some respondents would like on-leash dog access to enjoy daily walks. At the same time, some were worried about potential negative environmental impacts by pets on the site.

Accessible design – Many respondents stated that the site should be accessible to all users, especially people with disability and children. There were suggestions to consult with schools and advisory groups to inform accessible design at the site.

Transport – Respondents would like to see public transport connections to the site, including Drysdale and Ocean Grove. Some respondents would like additional bike lanes and walking tracks connected to surrounding areas.

Future engagement and communications – Several respondents would like to receive ongoing updates and participate in future planning of the site through engagement opportunities such as workshops and working groups.

Next steps

The draft concept plan will be revised following community and stakeholder feedback. We will then prepare a landscape masterplan and project plan for the site. The project plan will provide the detail around anticipated timelines and budget. It will help identify funding requirements and opportunities for community input.

Transforming the site and implementing the actions agreed with our community will be carried out progressively over a number of years. We have prepared a staging plan, which is available on the project web page.

In the meantime, the site will be opened up at set times to help with ongoing bush regeneration activities. A 'Friends of' group including local community members has been established. This group will be managed by Bellarine Catchment Network (BCN). If you are interested in being involved, please register your interest via the project web page (please see link below).

More information

To stay up to date on this project, please visit:

www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin