

# Bellarine Basin

Vision, principles and objectives  
Community feedback report

November 2021

# 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.

With co-funding from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, we are planning to rehabilitate the Bellarine Basin and restore the natural headwaters of Yarram Creek.

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 will broadly consist of:

- Development of a vision statement, project principles and objectives
- Consideration of activities that will be accommodated on the site
- Development of a concept plan before we finalise a (landscape) masterplan and project plan for the site

Following this program 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

99 community members provided feedback throughout August and September 2021 on a draft vision statement, project principles and objectives that were developed by an agency advisory group (consisting of staff from Wadawurrung, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, City of Greater Geelong and Barwon Water).

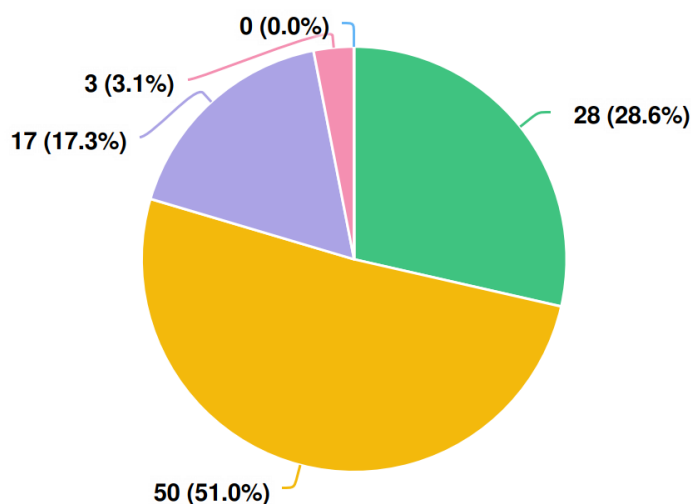
The first phase of engagement opportunities were promoted broadly to ensure inclusive engagement, and there will be further consultation opportunities over the next 12 months. The feedback outlined in this report provides a snapshot of the community sentiment at the time.

In general, the responses were very supportive of the draft vision statement, project principles and objectives prepared by the agency reference group. Further detail is provided below.

## Draft vision statement

Yarram Creek (project working title) will be a unique, inclusive and accessible community place for people to celebrate, respect, enjoy and immerse themselves in its cultural, natural and recreational values.

## Level of community satisfaction with the draft vision



### Question options

● Very satisfied    ● Satisfied    ● Unsure    ● Dissatisfied    ● Very dissatisfied

The majority of responses (79.6%) indicated they were either satisfied or highly satisfied with the draft vision statement.

Feedback received along with the satisfaction rating indicated strong support for a new natural area or parkland on the Bellarine Peninsula, with some noting that health restrictions had highlighted the need for more local (<5km away) places like this. There was excitement around the restoration and seeing action on site, with strong support for the site being accessible to the community.

Some respondents felt the vision needed to emphasise the protection of the natural environment, local biodiversity or linking to other areas of high biodiversity. There were some respondents who questioned the term recreational values and whether the vision statement was too people centric. Natural and passive recreation – “a quiet place in nature for reflection” – was a strong theme.

A number of respondents felt that the statement called for more detail, while others felt it covered all bases. A few respondents wanted more detail and to see the activities that would be on the site, with some advocating for a sharing of the space, others advocating specific uses (bikes, fishing, a café) and others advocating for no active recreation.

Some comments noted that the Wadawurrung name should be emphasised rather than the less specific “cultural values”.

Overall the majority of those with suggested improvements were satisfied with the vision.

## Draft principles

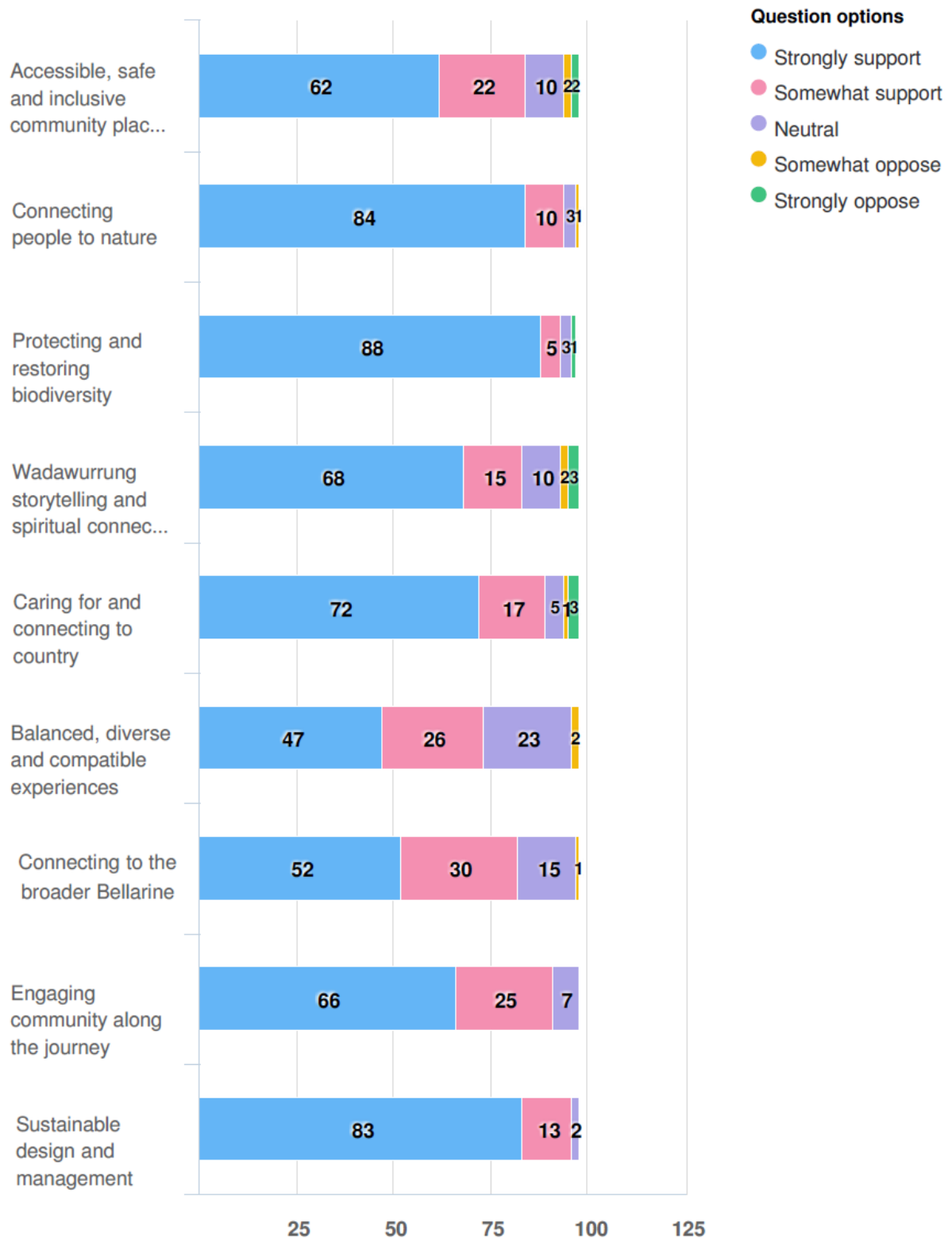
Feedback on the level of support was sought on the following draft principles:

- Accessible, safe and inclusive community place
- Connecting people to nature
- Protecting and restoring biodiversity
- Wadawurrung storytelling and spiritual connection
- Caring for and connecting to country
- Balanced, diverse and compatible experiences
- Connecting to the broader Bellarine
- Engaging community along the journey
- Sustainable design and management



Bellarine Basin site

## Level of community support for the draft principles



As is shown in the graph above there was strong support (strongly support and somewhat support) for all draft principles. Eight of the nine draft principles had a support rating of between 80 to 90 percent.

The principle that suggested the site include balanced, diverse and compatible experiences was the only principle that had less support (73 percent).

Some respondents felt that environmental and biodiversity outcomes should be prioritised over recreational uses – or consideration given to some restricted access so that indigenous flora and fauna can flourish. There was also a number of respondents who sought clarification on what ‘compatible spaces’ means.

### **Supportive comments included:**

This sounds great, love the concept,  
they are all good

Need more gardens and parks

Strong support for protecting and  
enhancing the natural environment  
and ecosystems – references to ‘green’  
and ‘wildlife’ corridors

Strong support for connection to  
Wadawurrung people and their  
culture – “respecting and  
acknowledging Traditional owners of  
the land is imperative if we want to  
educate the next generation.”

Strong support for community  
involvement at the planning and  
implementation phases

Pleased to see the site is being  
protected from residential  
development

### **Considerations for Barwon Water to explore:**

Whether all principles could be  
achieved and whether having a  
balance of uses, or the broader  
community involved would  
compromise the conservation values

Avoid crowding or over use -  
some respondents were  
specifically concerned by overuse  
by dog walkers and bicycle riders  
and runners

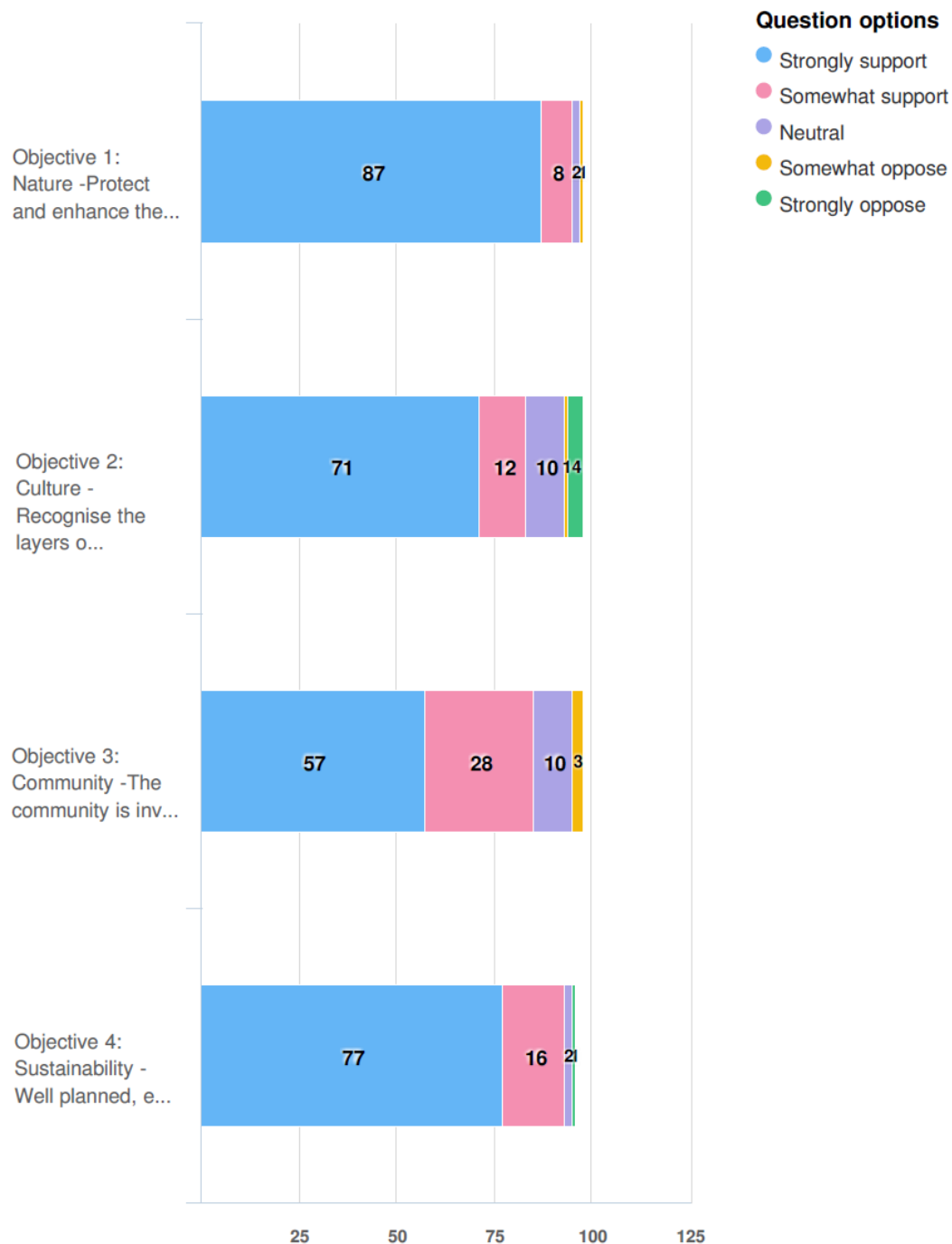
Need more clarity on the actual site  
uses and activities not allowed

## Draft objectives

Feedback on the level of support was sought on the following draft objectives:

Objective 1:	Nature - Protect and enhance the unique features, habitats, ecosystems and biodiversity
Objective 2:	Culture - Recognise the layers of human use and contact with the landscape, and the intangible connection of the Wadawurrung people
Objective 3:	Community - The community is involved in guiding the future of the place and ultimately connects in a range of safe and compatible recreational and nature-based experiences
Objective 4:	Sustainability - Well planned, ecologically balanced community place that can be maintained into the future

## Level of community support for the draft objectives





There was strong support for all the draft objectives, with each of them receiving between 80 and 90 percent support or strongly support.

There was strong support for protecting and enhancing the natural environment, but with differing views on how this could be achieved. Community feedback identified the need for greater clarity about what it means to protect and enhance the natural environment. For some this included opportunities to enjoy through passive recreation and nature based activities. For others, it was felt human activity should be restricted to allow cultural and biodiversity values to be prioritised.

### A snapshot of comments

"All of the objectives are spot on. Sustainability, connection with the original owners of the land etc is very important to many residents. I am a fan of this initiative."

"This peninsula has so few natural spaces left. It is vital that we protect habitat for plants and animals, as well as humans."

"Community consultation will always be paramount. The biggest driving force in the planning of this space should be coming from the people using it."

"[COVID] lockdowns have highlighted the need for local spaces to walk and enjoy nature."

"If opened up, the biodiversity values will be diminished."

"I prefer overarching guidance from conservationists, ecologists and above all, the Wadawurrung".

We have also noted suggestions for minor wording changes to the draft vision, principles and objectives - including how to make certain statements clearer and more meaningful to the community.

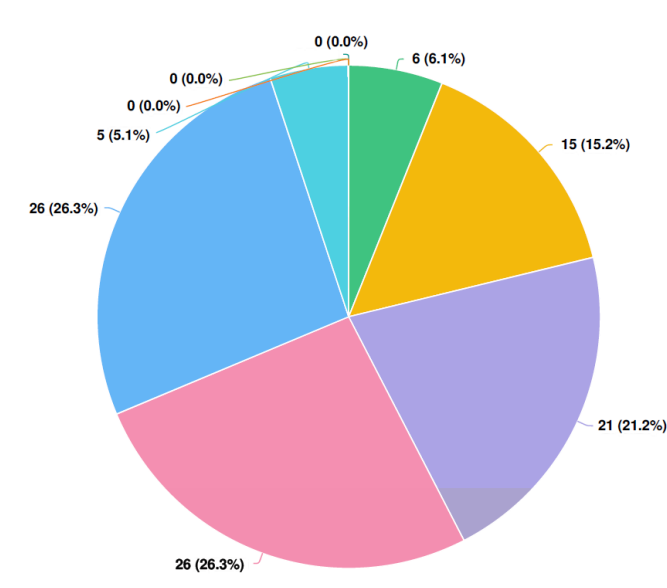
Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share feedback and valuable local insights through this process.

The purpose of this report is to provide the compiled findings of the stage one community feedback for the Bellarine Basin project.



# Appendix 1 – demographics

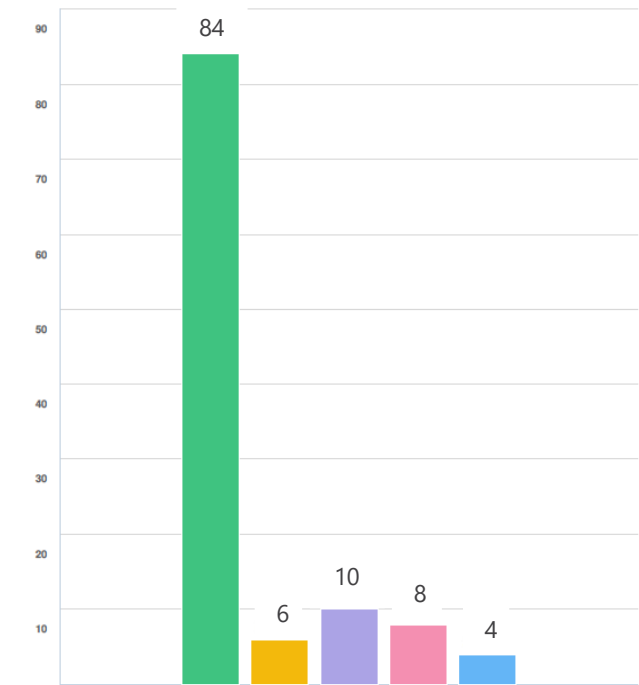
Please select your age range



Question options

85 and over 18-24 Under 18 75-84 65-74 55-64 45-54 35-44 25-34

Please describe your connection

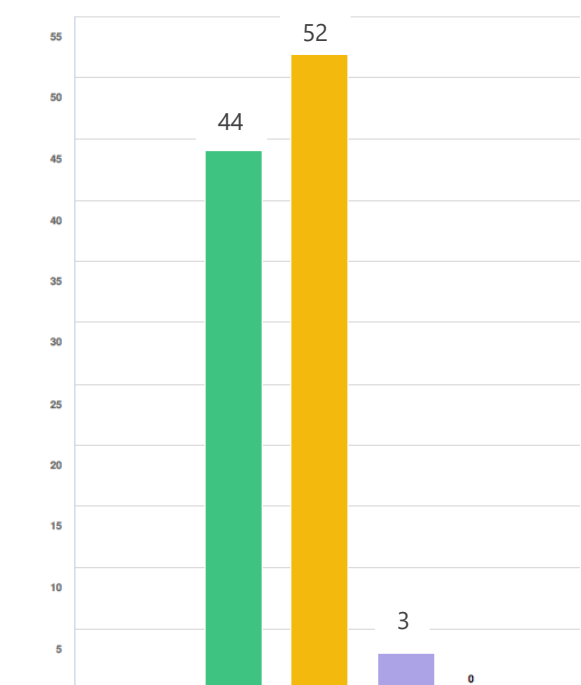


Question options

Other Visitor Representing a local community / environment

Local business Local resident

Please indicate your gender



Question options

Other Prefer not to say Female Male

## Apendix 2 – promotion

The community survey was promoted broadly across local newspapers via media release and advertising, local community and school newsletters, direct email to local residents and interest groups, Barwon Water's social media and website channels, and Barwon Water's Environmental and Customer Advisory Committees.

### Local paper advertising

### Bellarine Basin transformation: have your say

**Barwon Water is embarking on a project to transform the disused Bellarine Basin site in Wallington into more than 30 hectares of environmental and public open space to be enjoyed by the community for years to come. Have your say and help us reimagine this space.**

We are seeking feedback from the community on the draft vision, principles and objectives for the site.

This will help guide our decision making around any potential activities for the site.

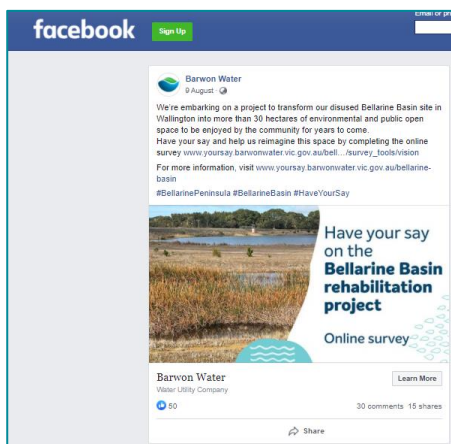
Learn more and complete the online survey:  
[www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin](http://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin)

Hard copies are available on request.

Closing date for feedback: Monday 6 September 2021

1300 656 007 | [info@barwonwater.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@barwonwater.vic.gov.au)  
[www.barwonwater.vic.gov.au](http://www.barwonwater.vic.gov.au) | [f](#) [t](#) [v](#) [g](#) [i](#) [n](#)

### Social media



### Bellarine Basin project web page

<https://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin>



## Appendix 3 – general themes

We have grouped comments made by participants across the survey to provide a general guide to the level of support (or number of comments) that could be attributed to each theme. Some comments have been shared as part of the main report and capture the sentiments.

Vision	Number of comments per theme
On track; covers all bases; comprehensive	21
Retain for all to enjoy; accessible to everyone; public space	14
Too vague, need more detail	12
Cultural and / or natural values are to be prioritised over recreational values	11
Support for natural values; native flora and fauna; great initiative for birds	9
Support for cultural values	7
Natural and passive recreation	7
Free from development	6
Inclusive and respectful; accessibility; balances outcomes	3
Glad to see action; excited to see it restored	2
Fishing	1
Game reserve	1
Consult neighbouring properties	1
Pines should go	1
Concern for birds with tree removal	1
No camping	1

Principles	Number of comments per theme
Protect and enhance ecosystems / natural values / biodiversity – make green corridors / wildlife corridors	17
On track; wonderful; all seems important	13
Strong support for cultural connection and caring for country	9
Prioritise environmental / biodiversity outcomes over recreation	8
Passive recreation – quiet place in nature for reflection; connecting people to nature in a compatible way	6
A space for all – need more gardens / parks	5
What does balanced, diverse, compatible mean?	4
Must be maintained and be sustainable	4

Need more detail / evidence	4
Clash of uses – can't be all things to all people	3
Accessibility	3
No overcrowding / overuse	3
Protect from development	3
Ensure some restricted access to support environment / biodiversity	2
Community engagement is important	2
Prioritise cultural (and biodiversity) outcomes over public access	1
Do not support the cultural diversity focus	1
Needs to reference Wadawurrung and pioneering people	1
Fishers and hunters	1
Losing water storage / retain for recycled water	1
Pines should go	1
Tourism opportunity – with markets, paddle boats and wildlife	1

Objectives	Number of comments per theme
Protect and enhance ecosystems / natural values	12
On track – all very good, comprehensive	8
Prioritise environmental / biodiversity outcomes over recreation	7
Passive recreation – quiet place in nature for reflection	6
A space for all	5
Strong support for cultural connection and caring for country	4
Prioritise cultural (and biodiversity) outcomes over recreation	3
Must be maintained and be sustainable	3
Nature based activities	2
Protect from development	2
Game reserve / hunting	2
Community engagement is important	2
Reference Wadawurrung and pioneering people	1
Please don't put in playground	1
Recycled water and storage	1
Ensure some restricted access to support environment / biodiversity	1

## More information

For more information, please visit our Bellarine Basin web page:

[www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin](http://www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au/bellarine-basin)

You can also contact a member of the project team at Barwon Water on 1300 656 007 or

[projects@barwonwater.vic.gov.au](mailto:projects@barwonwater.vic.gov.au)