

Bellarine Basin

Proposed site uses
and activities

Community engagement report

December 2021 to March 2022

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

95 community members provided feedback from December 2021 to March 2022 on a proposed list of site uses and activities. The list was developed by an agency advisory group, consisting of staff from Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, City of Greater Geelong and Barwon Water.

This was the second phase of engagement for the project. We promoted the feedback opportunities broadly to ensure inclusive engagement, and there will be further consultation opportunities throughout 2022. 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 site uses and activities prepared by the agency reference group. Further detail is provided below.

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Introduction

This report outlines the approach and outcomes from the community and stakeholder engagement process for stage two consultation – which ran from 20 December 2021 to 14 March 2022. It includes analysis of the feedback received on the Bellarine Basin project.

Engagement approach

Current 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 (Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and City of Greater Geelong) 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 will inform a concept plan of the site, which the community will have their say on as part of the stage three consultation phase.

Previous engagement phase

The stage one consultation phase on the vision, principles and objectives for the site concluded on 6 September 2022. These were developed by the agency advisory group and informed a survey for the public to have their say. Feedback on the draft vision, principles and objectives informed our proposed land activities and site uses.

Engagement limitation

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

- Given the uncertainty about COVID-19 restrictions, Barwon Water engaged with the community online. This meant it was not possible to conduct engagement at Bellarine Basin in person.
- The findings section describes results as a 'majority' response where there is 70% or higher selecting the same response.

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.

Overview of engagement activities and promotion

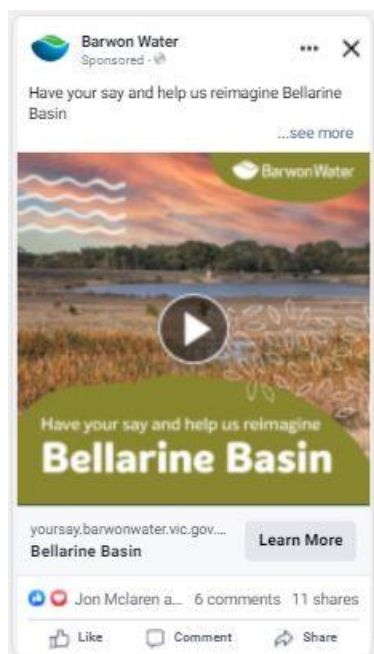
The stage two consultation phase also included presentations to the City of Greater Geelong's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Bellarine North Rotary Club, Geelong Field Naturalists and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. This allowed us to further local community awareness about the project and ensure that we are noting different perspectives and needs as part of our site planning, to ensure the site is inclusive and enjoyable for all.

These presentations were in addition to the advisory group consultation and survey promotion detailed below.

How the engagement was promoted

To promote the site uses and activities survey, we ran advertisements in local newspapers, issued a media release and sent emails to our database of project subscribers. Geo-targeted Facebook and Instagram advertising was also shared to reach the local community.

Below is an example of the Facebook ad:



Participation

This section outlines who participated in the activities.

Participant overview

- The Bellarine Basin rehabilitation Your Say web page had 821 visits between 20 December 2021 and 14 March 2022. The Bellarine Basin corporate web page had 175 views during the same period.
- The Facebook ad, which ran between January and March 2022, reached 22,236 people, resulted in 26,988 impressions (views) and 211 clicks.
- Two email marketing campaigns (eDMs) were sent to project subscribers to promote the site uses and activities survey. Of the 149 recipients of the 14 January 2022 eDM, 105 people opened it and 26 clicked through to the landing page. Of the 152 recipients of the 7 March 2022 eDM, 92 opened it and 30 clicked through to the landing page.
- We held four meetings with community and stakeholder groups.
- The survey received a total of 95 responses.

Who we heard from

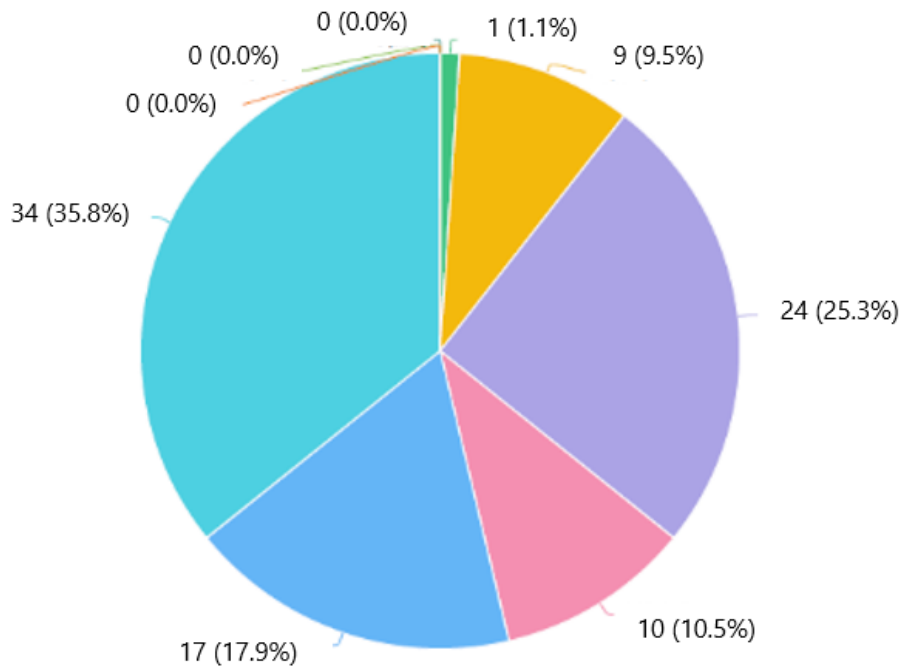
In addition to community briefings we heard from 95 survey respondents and a snapshot of the demographics is below.

Q14. Please select your age group

Q15. Please indicate your gender

Q17. Please share your postal code

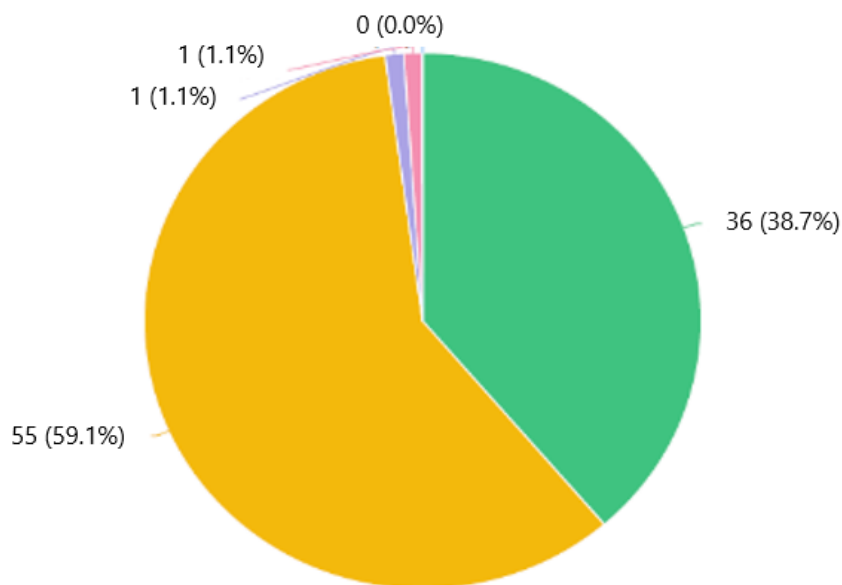
Q14 Please select your age range



Question options

● Under 18 ● 25-34 ● 35-44 ● 45-54 ● 66-74 ● 75-64 ● 86 and over

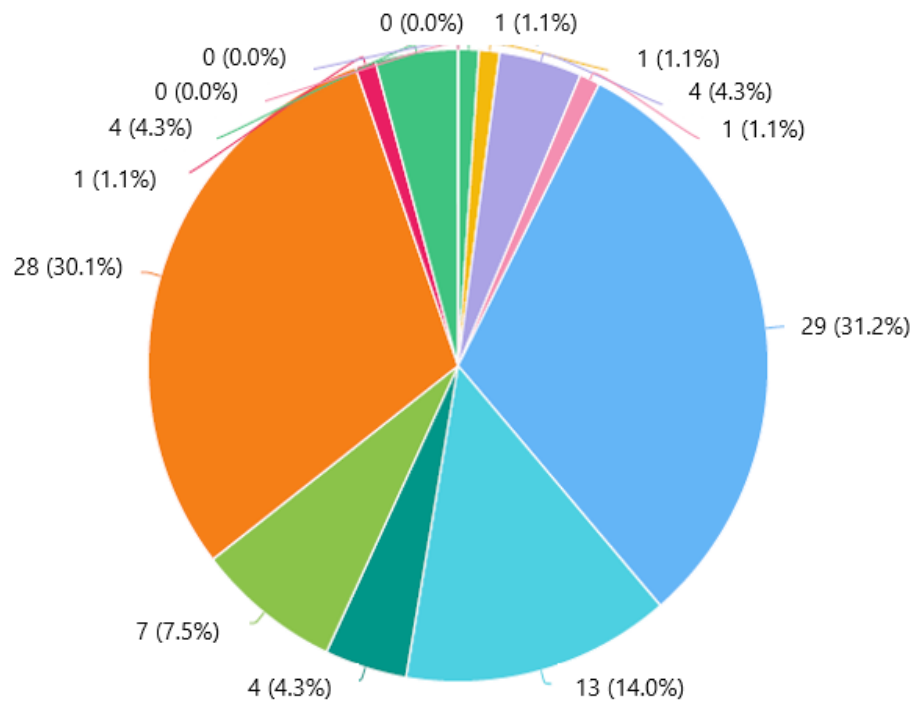
Q15 Please indicate your gender



Question options

● Male ● Female ● I use a different noun ● Prefer not to say ● Non-binary

Q17 Please share your postal code



Question options

- 3216
 ● 3218
 ● 3220
 ● 3221
 ● 3222
 ● 3223
 ● 3224
 ● 3225
 ● 3226
 ● 3227
- Other
 ● 3217
 ● 3219
 ● 3228

Findings

Community and stakeholder feedback during the consultation period was most focused on inclusivity, accessibility, and the uses and activities available at the Bellarine Basin when it is open to the public.

Overall, there is general excitement about the project. Most respondents see it as an opportunity for a new community open space for the community. Some respondents are supportive of the project but want to ensure their concerns will be addressed or clarified. The feedback has been summarised into key themes below:

- visiting Bellarine Basin
- how the site can enhance health and wellbeing
- Bellarine Basin uses and activities
- accessibility and inclusion.

"This is a wonderful asset to the community and I am sure locals will appreciate using over & over and show off to their visitors over the years ahead." – **Survey response**

"I love the idea of combining accessible areas with wild spaces that are out of bounds for humans. The Bellarine peninsula needs this, and I think it will create a magnificent resource for generations to come." – **Survey response**

Visiting the Bellarine Basin

Survey respondents were asked who they would most likely visit the Bellarine Basin with and how frequently they would visit the site when it is open to the public.

As shown in figure 1, more than half (52%, 47) of survey respondents stated that they would visit the Bellarine Basin once a month as a new community place. This was followed by 37% respondents (33) who would visit once a week, 8% respondents (7) once a year or less, and 3% respondents (3) once a week.

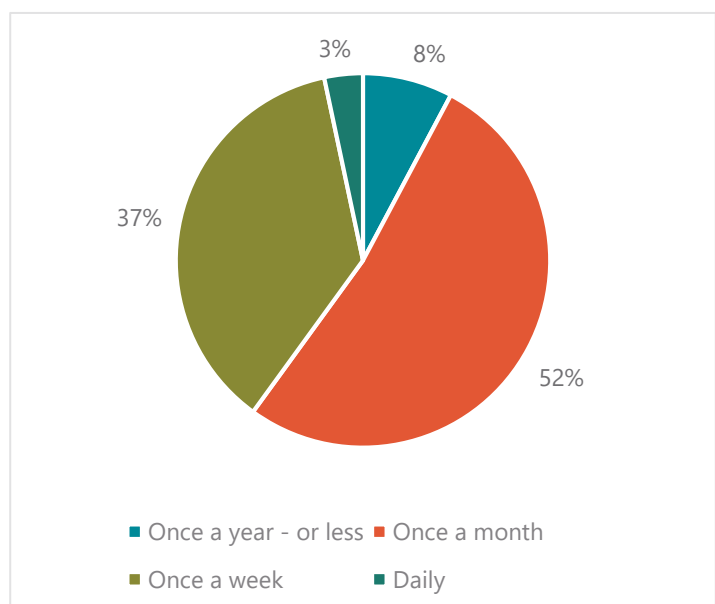


Figure 1 Responses to 'how often do you think you would visit this new community place?' (90 responses)

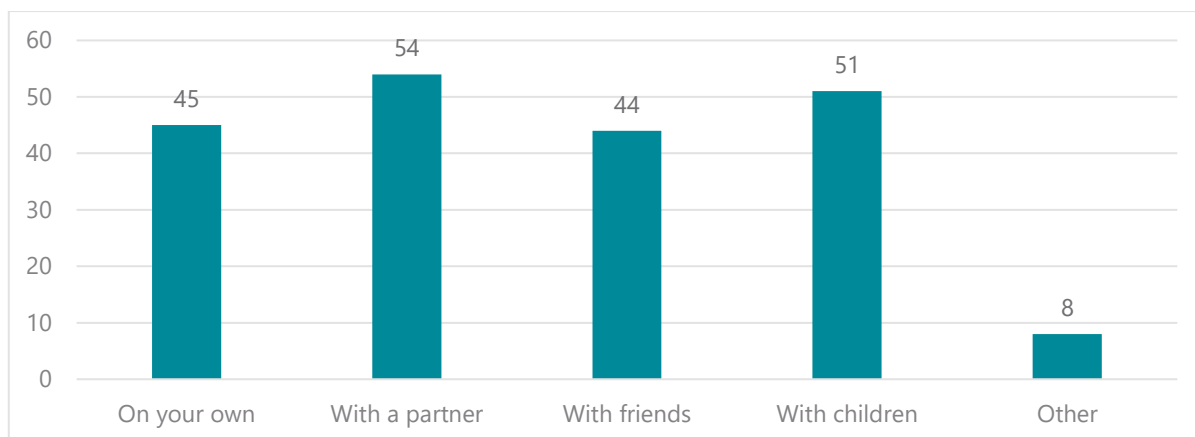


Figure 2 Responses to 'who would you most likely visit the site with?' (202 responses)

Survey respondents were also asked who they would most likely visit the Bellarine Basin with. As displayed in figure 2, the majority of respondents would visit the Bellarine Basin with a partner (27%, 54), and children (25%, 51). This was followed by 22% (45) of respondents would prefer to visit on their own, 22% (44) would visit with friends. Other people that respondents (4%, 8) would visit the Bellarine Basin with are organised groups, including community groups, volunteering groups, and school groups to participate in social activities; with their family and friends, pets, and people they are caring for.

How the site can enhance health and wellbeing

Respondents were asked how they might use the site and the specific activities to enhance their health and wellbeing. The common themes are outlined below.

- **Active health benefits** – Half of the respondents (50%, 63) shared that they would do physical exercise at the site, this can be supported by activities such as walking, cycling, doing yoga and fishing.
- **Connection to land and nature** – 24% of respondents (30) agree that the site would be a place to connect with the nature by spending time outdoors, enjoying fresh air, and admiring the plants and wildlife.
- **Social benefits** – 11% of respondents (14) expressed that the site might be used as a social gathering space to spend time with friends and family, and participate in organised group activities.
- **Mental health benefits** – 10% of respondents (12) stated that they would use the site to relax, meditate, and have some quiet times to benefit their mental health.
- **Educational benefits** – 6% of respondents (7) would visit the site as an opportunity to gain new knowledge about the natural environment and indigenous culture and history.

Some (6) respondents also stressed the importance of planning and design of the site to benefit their health and wellbeing. Comments included protecting privacy of surrounding residents, having nature-based nature, and ensuring accessible transportation to the site.

"Just good access and being able to gently wander some tracks and paths."
– **Survey response**

"An Environment Education Centre that would conduct regular tours of the site to explain its flora and fauna and indigenous history." – **Survey response**

Bellarine Basin uses and activities

The survey raised the ways people would like to use the Bellarine Basin and what activities should take place there. Respondents were asked what their desired and undesired activities would be at the site.

Respondents also shared their views on the proposed uses recommended by the agency advisory group.

Desired uses and activities

Respondents were asked what other complementary uses would draw them to the site, besides those that have been suggested in the list of proposed site uses and activities. Multiple ideas with common themes were captured, including:

- **Recreational activities** – 28% of respondents (47) would be drawn to use the Bellarine Basin for recreational activities, this included walking, hiking, fishing, bird watching, cycling, swimming and boating.
- **Educational activities** – 24% of respondents (39) would like to participate in educational activities at the Bellarine Basin. Specific ideas shared by respondents include walking tours and information boards for both adults and children. These boards should contain information on local wildlife, flora and fauna, as well as indigenous arts, culture and history.
- **Social activities** – 21% of respondents (34) would like to spend time at the Bellarine Basin for social activities. Examples include BBQ and picnic with family and friends, play time for children, volunteering activities, and using the site as a function space for events and performances.

Some respondents further provided feedback regarding design and layout that would draw them to site:

- **Design of place** – 15% of respondents (24) expressed that the site should create a peaceful and welcoming environment for all visitors. This can be achieved by placing seatings throughout the site, installing inclusive designs for people with disability, and ensuring safety for children and women.
- **Environmental opportunities** – 9% of respondents (15) respondents shared their ideas to protect and enhance the natural environment, including revegetation of native plant species, install non-intrusive design for picnic areas, toilets, and bird viewing areas.

"A walking track to observe natural habits." – **Survey response**

"An Education Centre would be a great hub for the community to support and utilise in the Bellarine Basin." – **Survey response**

Undesired uses and activities

Survey respondents also provided feedback on site uses and activities that they considered unsuitable. There were concerns from respondents that these activities would damage the natural environment, disturb the wildlife, and pose safety risks to other visitors. Examples of these uses and activities are:

- **Sports that are damaging to the environment**, such as cycling, mountain biking, motor biking activities (24% of responses), horse riding (6% of responses) and 4WDing (4%). Water sports, such as swimming, boating and canoeing was also mentioned.
- **Allowing hunting, fishing, and shooting** – 5% of responses
- **Allowing dogs access or having dog off-leash areas** – 27% of responses
- **Social or commercial activities** that are noisy, create litter or have negative environmental impacts, such as camping, caravan access, BBQs and night-time activities – 18% of responses

Nature based activities and education

Respondents were asked if they had any questions or comments regarding the uses of the Bellarine Basin recommended by the agency advisory group. Nearly half of respondents (44%) felt neutral about the recommended uses, 27% of respondents provided positive feedback, 7% with negative feedback. Main reasons include:

- Respondents who were supportive of the recommended uses agreed that it would be an opportunity to create more green open space for the growing community.
- Concerns were raised by respondents regarding accessibility of the site for all visitors, bushfire risk management, and long-term community engagement opportunities at the site.
- There were worries from respondents that the recommended uses would bring negative environmental impacts and damage ecological sustainability with increased public access and human activities at the site.

Some (22%) respondents raised questions about the uses recommended by the agency advisory group, examples include:

- Who will manage the site in the long-term and how is this project funded?
- How were Aboriginal communities engaging with the project?
- How will the site attract visitors from other surrounding nature reserves?
- How will excluded activities be monitored or enforced?
- Would pedestrian and cycling paths be separated?

Respondents were further asked to put forward their ideas that would support the uses at the Bellarine Basin recommended by the agency advisory group, key ideas include:

- **Environmental education** – 44% of respondents (43) suggested to collaborate with environmental groups to design and organise birdwatching sessions, guided or self-guided walks that would deliver knowledge on local wildlife and vegetation.
- **Aboriginal cultural activities** – 14% of respondents (14) emphasised that Aboriginal culture and history should be acknowledged and incorporated at the site. This could be delivered by consulting Aboriginal communities to create and install information boards and sound garden.
- **Recreational activities** – 13% of respondents (13) shared that they would like to have facilities that support recreational activities at the site, such as walking tracks, play opportunities for children, bike tracks and fishing facilities.
- **Place making opportunities** – 13% of respondents (13) pointed out that there are place making opportunities to place wayfinding signage, install artworks by local artists, and host community activities at the site.

Some (14) respondents provided additional feedback regarding environmental management, stressing that environmental impacts should be minimised through measures like utilising existing natural materials for facilities at the site.

"Add signage to show the different types of wildlife you may find in the area. Having sculptures by Indigenous artists along a walking trail with information about the sculpture." – **Survey response**

"A nature play playground with an aboriginal focus would be a great way for kids to learn about the areas rich past." – **Survey Response**

Accessible and inclusive Bellarine Basin

Survey respondents shared how they would access the Bellarine Basin and expressed their views on aspects to be considered to ensure inclusivity and accessibility of the site for people from different age, ability and cultural backgrounds.

Travelling to the Bellarine Basin

Respondents were asked how they would travel to the site when it's open to the public, and whether there were other preferred modes of transport to access the site.

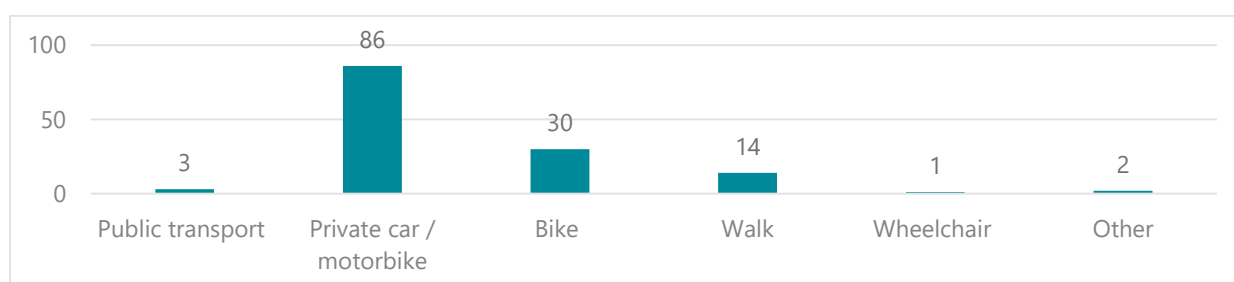


Figure 3 Responses to 'how would you travel to the site?' (136 responses)

As displayed in Figure 3, 63% of the participants (86) would visit by private car or motorbike, followed by 22% (30) would visit by bike, 10% (14) would walk to the site, 2% (3) by public transport, and less than 1% (1) by wheelchair.

Of the 2 respondents who selected 'Other' and 8 respondents who provided further feedback, it was stated that there should be public transport and cycling networks to connect the site with surrounding areas to ensure accessibility for the public. Other respondents noted that pram access will be important for families; pedestrian and cyclist safety should also be ensured.

"...the frequency in which community members would visit this site, depends greatly on the surrounding infrastructure and accessibility." – **Survey response**

"I would love to bike ride there with our family if a safe bike route was made." – **Survey response**

A Bellarine Basin for all

Respondents were asked to share what they think should be considered in project planning to ensure a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable experience for people from different ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. Several aspects have been raised:

- **Accessible design** – Nearly half of respondents (42%, 36) stated that the site should be accessible for all users, especially people with disability, young children, and elderly. This can be achieved by ensuring wheelchair and pram access, and providing sufficient seating throughout the site.
- **Amenities** – 17% of respondents (15) suggested park amenities to create an enjoyable experience for all users. This included the installation of sufficient parking spaces, toilets, seating, rubbish bins, play opportunities for children, and ensuring phone and internet services at the site.
- **Wayfinding** – 14% of respondents (12) stressed that wayfinding throughout the site should be inclusive, informative, and interesting for people of all ages and different cultural backgrounds. Signage should be available in multiple languages, colour coded, and include information that introduce the wildlife and vegetation of the site.
- **Safety and security** – 7% of respondents (6) mentioned that the site should be safe for all users at any time of the day by installing lighting, security cameras, and allowing overlooking of the site to create natural surveillance.
- **Maintenance** – 6% of respondents (5) stressed that maintenance and cleanliness of site facilities such as walking tracks and toilets are important to ensure user experience at the site.
- **Environment design** – 3% of respondents (3) shared their comments on environment design at the site, including planting taller trees for shading, and incorporation of water elements.
- **Other** – other feedback provided by 9 respondents include ensuring the park to be pet-friendly, conducting regular pest control, creating opportunities for visitors to encounter with wildlife, and allowing local job opportunities at the site.

"Having it accessible for everyone and easy to navigate areas for elderly and young children." – **Survey response**

"Interpretive signs with ecological information pitched to various age groups and cultural backgrounds." – **Survey response**

Email submissions

In addition to survey responses we also heard from community members via email.

Feedback included designated areas on site that are preserved for wildlife only; and ensuring gathering places / picnic areas did not lead to negative impacts, such as rubbish or damage to vegetation.

An idea for a mini railway was also suggested.

Next steps

The next stage of consultation (stage three) will include a concept plan, which shows the proposed layout and activities for the site in a map based form. We will seek feedback from the community on the concept plan before finalising a project plan and commencing implementation.

More information

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

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