

Koonung Creek Reserve

Draft Concept Design Engagement

City of Boroondara

09.11.23

capire

Giving every person a voice.

Capire Consulting Group
The Commons,
Wurundjeri Country
36-38 Gipps Street,
Collingwood VIC 3066
(03) 9285 9000

info@capire.com.au
capire.com.au

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and deeply respects the Wurundjeri
people and
the Traditional Owners
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Unless otherwise noted, the views expressed in our work represent those of the participants and not necessarily those of our consultants or our clients.

Definition

Community

An individual or a group of people united by at least one common characteristic such as geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or tradition.

Community engagement/ Consultation

A process in which the community has a role in Council's decision-making process.

Stakeholder

An individual or group that has an interest in any Council decision or activity, including Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities, other tiers of government and government agencies, businesses, educational institutes, not-for-profits and philanthropic organisations, visitors, residents, advocacy groups, children, ratepayers and renters, emergency services, culturally and linguistically diverse people and many more.

Acronyms

CoB City of Boroondara

NELP North East Link Project

UDLP Urban Design and Landscape Plan

VERSION	AUTHOR	AUTHORISED	DATE
1	Bec Yandell	Tiffany Tang	27/10/2023
2	Bec Yandell	Tiffany Tang	09/11/2023

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Executive summary

The Victorian Government's North East Link Project (NELP) is developing a master plan and a concept design for the Koonung Creek Reserve (KCR) to address the impacts of the North East Link (NEL) project. Building on past consultations with the community and Council's internal stakeholders, Capire Consulting Group (Capire) was engaged by Council to seek feedback on the draft concept design.

Between 27 September and 22 October 2023 (3.5 weeks), the City of Boroondara conducted a series of consultation activities to build community understanding of the Koonung Creek Reserve Draft Concept Design and seek community feedback through a range of online and in-person activities.

Over 3,200 people were reached through the project website (available in English and Simplified Chinese), 153 completed a survey, 36 people participated in a pop-up or drop-in session, and 12 participated in a community workshop to provide detailed responses.

Features that received about 80% support:

- Council's position to advocate for mode separated path in the Reserve (81% support)
- The inclusion of a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)

Features that received over 50% support:

- Provide a park run route (71% support)
- Include a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)
- Include a new fenced dog park (67% support)
- Council's position to oppose the past water course feature (66% support)
- Include a new nature play area (63% support) and a new second playground at the western end of the reserve (60%)
- Include a beginner BMX track in the reserve (64% support)
- Include a bird hide at the wetlands (58% support)
- Include an intermediate BMX track in the reserve (55% support)

Features that received mixed views / no clear majority were:

- The removal of the dog beach at the wetlands (40% support; 36% oppose)
- Include two fenced dog parks (40% support; 33% oppose).

Council may consider undertaking further consultation on dog-related features. In relation to the water retention feature, one-fourth of the respondents did not understand the proposed feature. Further information and education could be provided to build community understanding.

Throughout the consultation, comments were made about the North East Link Project in general, the noise walls, and concerns about air pollution, ventilation, and disruption during construction.

This report will be used to inform Council's feedback to NELP to refine the Koonung Creek Reserve concept design and master plan and also support Council's submission on the Eastern Freeway widening UDLP .

1. Introduction

1.1. Project background

The Victorian Government's North East Link project (NELP) is developing a master plan and a concept design for the Koonung Creek Reserve (KCR) to address the impacts of the North East Link (NEL) project. The development of the NEL will see around 20% of the KCR acquired for new NEL infrastructure and around 65% of the reserve used for construction compounds and laydown site. A draft concept design for the KCR was developed by NELP in consultation with the City of Boroondara, as owners of the Koonung Creek Reserve.

Building on past consultations with the community and Council's internal stakeholders, Capire Consulting Group (Capire) was engaged by Council to seek feedback on the draft concept design.

The draft concept design developed by the NELP is shown in Figure 1

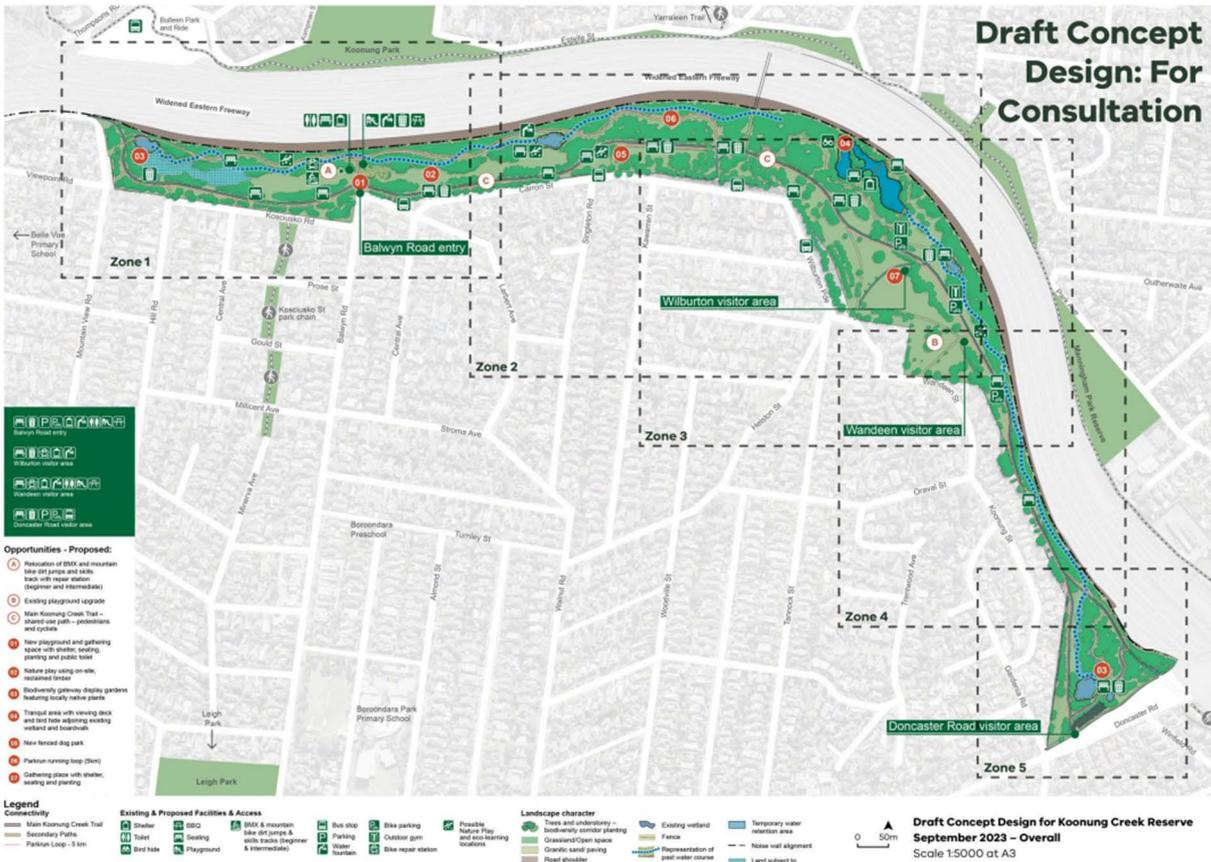


Figure 11114 Draft Concept Design of Koonung Creek Reserve

1.2. Previous consultation

Engagements with both the community and Council's internal stakeholders have been held prior to this phase of engagement.

In 2022, Council consulted with the community about the Koonung Creek Reserve. Feedback received was used to inform Council's submission to the North East Link Tunnels Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP) public exhibition. This UDLP included the design for the North East Link Tunnels from Watsonia to Bulleen and connecting Eastern Freeway upgrades in Bulleen and Balwyn North., The UDLP developed by the Spark Consortium and NELP shaped the draft concept design proposed for the Koonung Creek Reserve in late 2023.

Council officers with expertise relevant to supporting Koonung Creek Reserve have been consulted throughout the development of the draft concept design. Input to the draft concept design was provided by various teams include Landscape and Design, Drainage, Biodiversity, Environmental Sustainability, Parks and Sport and Recreation.

1.3. Report purpose

This report summarises the key findings from the community consultation on the draft concept design of the Koonung Creek Reserve. This report will be shared with Council to inform Council's feedback to NELP to refine the Koonung Creek Reserve concept design and master plan.

1.4. Report limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when reading this report:

- Capire has reported on information submitted by participants and interpreted the information to represent the views of participants as closely as possible.
- The consultation included multiple opportunities for participants to contribute. Some people may have taken part in multiple engagement activities, for example completed the survey and participated in a workshop. Their views may have been captured more than once.
- In some instances, participants did not respond to all survey questions, this meant that some questions received fewer responses than others.
- People who participated in the engagement self-selected to take part. As such, whilst every effort has been made to gather the views of stakeholders and the community, the information in this report may not reflect a statistically representative sample across all age groups and genders.
- Demographic data was captured through the survey, but not other engagement activities.
- Participants' feedback has been summarised. Qualitative data (comments and discussions) has been summarised under key themes reflecting issues that were frequently raised.
- Quantitative survey findings have been supported by qualitative findings from other engagement activities where relevant. Some workshops provided quantitative data. Due to smaller numbers of responses in comparison to the survey, these have not been included in the graphs.
- There were more registrations received for community workshops than the actual number of participants.

2. Consultation approach

This section provides an overview of the objectives, methodologies, and participation in the consultation process. The consultation activities occurred over three and a half weeks, commencing on 27 September 2023 and ending on 22 October 2023.

2.1. Objectives

The consultation was designed to meet a set of objectives. The objectives guided the planning and design of the engagement program and allowed for effective monitoring and evaluation. The objectives are:

1. To build community understanding of how their feedback from previous consultation was used to inform the concept design.
2. To build community awareness of the impacts of the NEL on KCR; and that concerns about the impact and the NEL should be directed to NELP.
3. To seek community feedback on the draft concept design.
4. To build awareness of the separate UDLP consultation process being run by NELP.
5. To develop new relationships and strengthen existing relationships between Council and its community.

2.2. Communications tools

Throughout the consultation, the Council sought to reach as many people as possible to alert them to the opportunity to review the concept plan and give feedback. Various tools and channels were used to provide information about the draft concept plan and to promote the consultation opportunities.

Table 1 outlines the tools to promote the consultation.

Table ~~1111~~ Communications tools

Tools	Results / views / distribution
Printed collateral Postcards Letters Posters On-site signage	Printed collateral (postcards, posters and on-site signage) were displayed at Council libraries, local shopping strips. Corflute signage was installed in 7 locations within KCR. Postcards were sent to 4,600 Balwyn North and Kew East households letter-boxes.
Engage Boroondara consultation page	A consultation page for the KCR concept design was established on Engage Boroondara. This page serves as a comprehensive resource, providing information about the proposed changes to KCR, a summary of community feedback from the 2022 consultation links to the NEL project page, as well as the consultation timeline and updates. The page also hosted the consultation survey and an Expression of Interest form for the community workshop.
Social media posts and advertisements	Council promoted the consultation through social media channels Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram. Promotional posts encouraged viewers to complete the survey online.
Email promotion	Emails were directly sent to stakeholders to promote and extend personal invitations to engage in various opportunities. A total of 34 emails were sent, including local interest groups, nearby schools and kindergartens, traders and Boroondara's cultural champions etc.
Staff weekly newsletter Councillor Information Bulletin	An article was included in Council's internal newsletter Connect. There were 98 clicks through to the KCR consultation page.
eDM to respondents from previous consultation	Emails were sent to community members who had registered their interest on Engage Boroondara. A total of 265 emails were sent.
Translation of communications collateral and online	Materials promoting the consultation were printed in Simplified Chinese to reach community members who prefer to read in their first language. The consultation page on Engage Boroondara was replicated on a stand-alone Simplified Chinese page The Simplified Chinese consultation page was reviewed and edited by native speakers.

2.3. Consultation tools

Error! Reference source not found. outlines the tools to seek feedback from the community about the concept design.

Table ~~2222~~ Engagement tools

Engagement tools	Description
Online survey Survey opened from 27 September to 22 October 2023.	<p>The online survey was the principal method for gathering community feedback. The survey was accessible via Engage Boroondara page.</p> <p>The objective of the survey was to provide a wide-reaching opportunity for community members to review the concept design and share their feedback and ideas for Koonung Creek Reserve.</p> <p>The survey asked 8 questions and 6 demographic questions.</p> <p>The full list of questions asked in the survey can be found in Appendix 1.</p>
Interactive Map	<p>To effectively show the changes proposed in KCR, an online interactive map was made available on the Engage Boroondara page.</p> <p>The interactive map enabled participants to see the 'before' and 'after' images of the KCR.</p> <p>The interactive map also allowed participants to zoom into different zones of the KCR for detailed observation.</p>
Children's colouring activity	<p>To raise awareness and engage with the younger cohort, an A4-size colouring-in activity for primary school aged children. These colouring-in sheet were available at pop-ups and at Council libraries.</p>
Pop-ups A two-hour pop-up at Boroondara Shopping Strip Saturday 7 October 2023.	<p>The pop-ups aim to raise awareness within the community about the concept design and encourage people to get involved in engagement activities.</p> <p>Large print outs of the concept design were on display.</p>
Drop-in session A one-hour community drop-in session Saturday 14 th October 10am-11am	<p>The drop-in session provided an opportunity for the community to ask questions about the concept design.</p> <p>Large print outs of the concept design were on display. Three council staff members were there to answer questions and support participation.</p>
Community workshop A one-hour community workshop Saturday 14 th October 11am-12pm	<p>This community workshop provided an opportunity for members of the community who submitted an Expression of Interest to participate in some activities in a workshop style format, alongside members of the general community.</p> <p>Participants spent 20 minutes to listen to Council's presentation; followed by small group discussions by activity zones. Participants spent a lot of time and effort to understand and review the draft concept design and existing conditions plans before they provided feedback.</p>



Figure 22222 Image from pop-up on Saturday 7th October

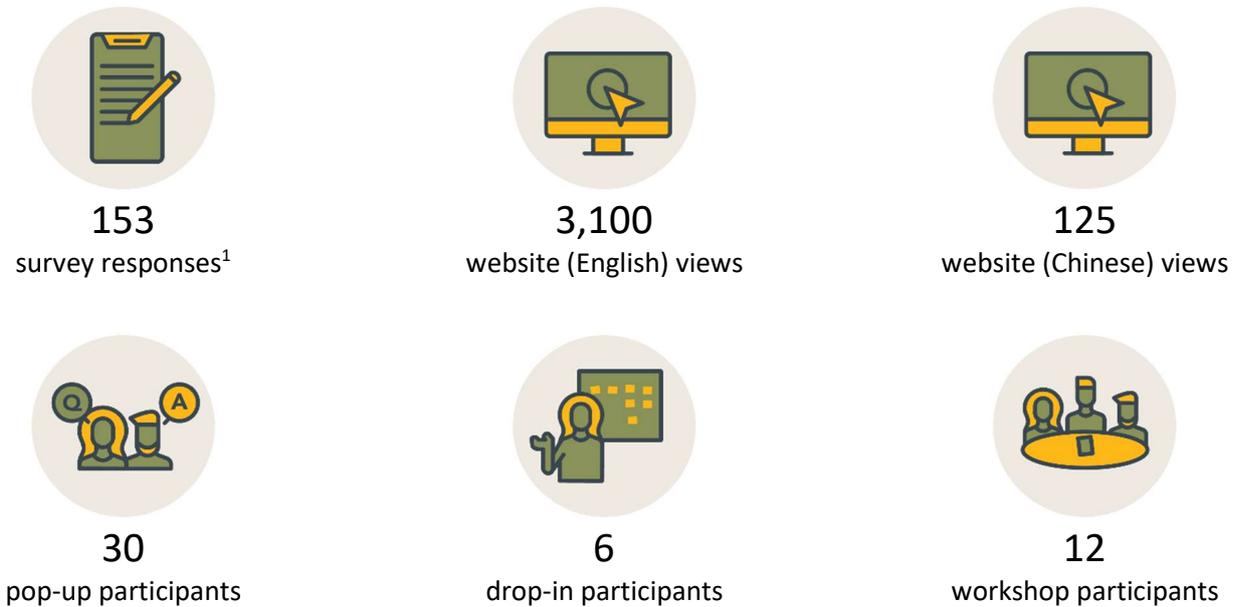


Figure 33333 Image from pop-up on Saturday 7th October

3. Participation

3.1. Participation

Over 3,000 people were reached or participated in this consultation. An overview of participation and reach of each engagement tool is summarised below.



3.2. Demographic information

Demographic information was collected through the survey. Survey respondents were asked to provide their age, gender, connection to Koonung Creek Reserve, suburb they live in, and how they heard about the consultation. This section provides an overview of the demographic data of all survey respondents.

3.2.1. Age

As shown in Figure 4, there was a spread of age groups across the survey respondents. The most represented age groups were 35-49 (27%) and 50-59 (26%), followed by 60-69 (16%). The least represented age groups were those who were 85 or above (1%), and under 18 (2%).

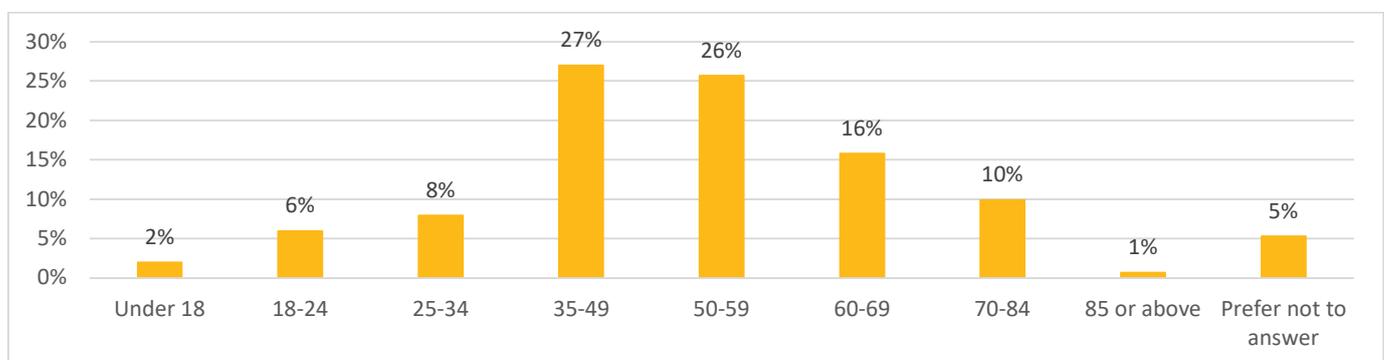


Figure 4 Age of survey respondents (n=153)

¹ 151 surveys were completed in English, and two were completed in Simplified Chinese. The Simplified Chinese responses have been translated and collated with the English survey responses

3.2.2. Gender

As shown in Figure 5, there was a balanced representation of gender in the survey. Half of the respondents identified as man (50%). A little under half of the respondents identified as woman (43%). 7% of respondents chose not to indicate their gender. No respondent used a different term to describe their gender.

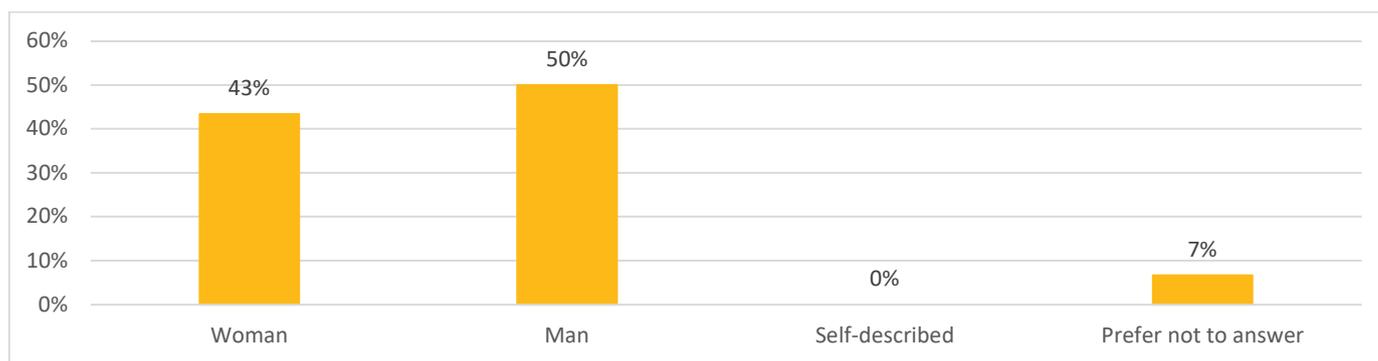


Figure 55555 Gender of survey respondents (n=153)

3.2.3. Connection

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of respondents indicated that they use the walking or bike paths in the Koonung Creek Reserve (79%), followed by those who live near the site (77%). Half of the survey respondents exercise in the reserve. Comparatively, there were fewer people who go to school near the reserve (6%) or are a member of a community group that uses the reserve. Community groups represented by respondents included the Thursday Cycling Group and Whitehorse Cyclers. A few respondents (3%) shared other connections they had to the Reserve, including to meet up with friends, enjoy passive recreation, and organise activities near the Reserve. Respondents were able to select multiple answers in response to this question.

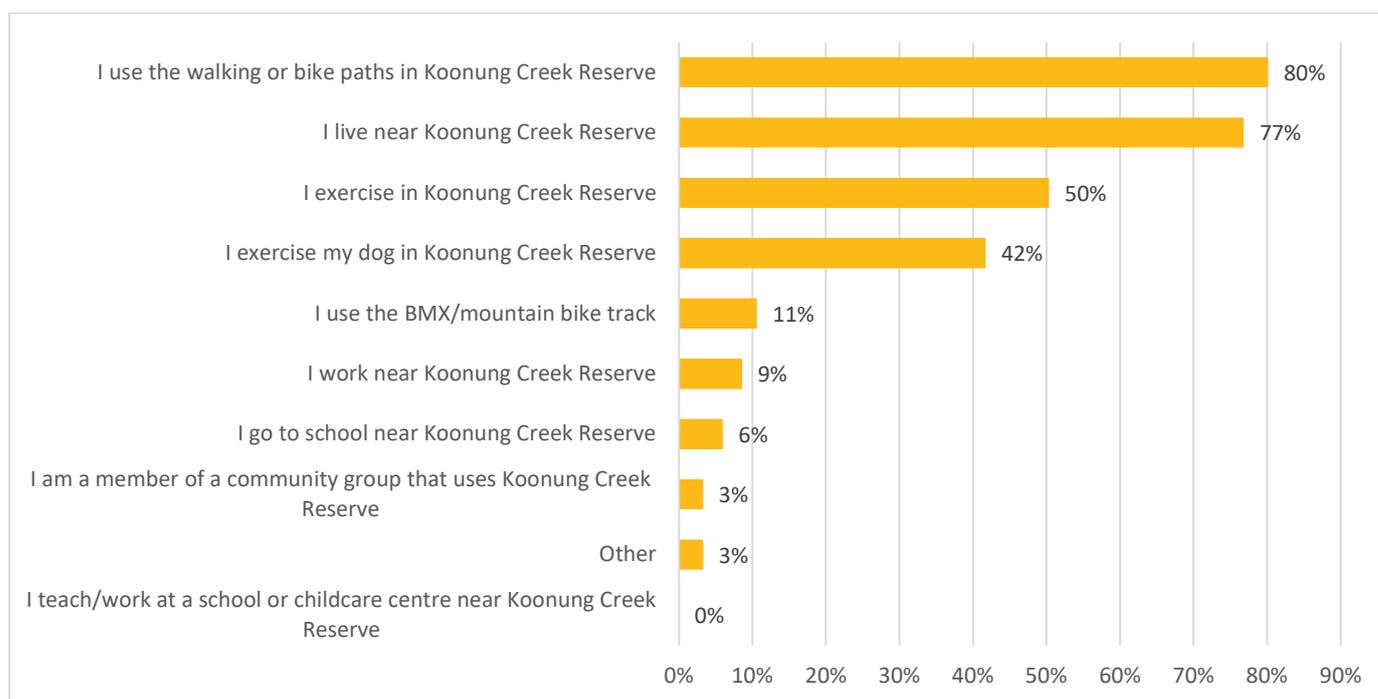


Figure 66666 Connection to Koonung Creek Reserve (n=153)

3.2.4. Suburb

As shown in Figure 7, more than half survey respondents live in Balwyn North (64%), this was followed by those who reside in Balwyn (4%). There was less representation of respondents who live in other suburbs in the City of Boroondara. There were 11% of respondents resided in other suburbs beyond Boroondara such as Bulleen, Templestowe Lower, Box Hill, Doncaster, Caulfield North, and South Yarra.

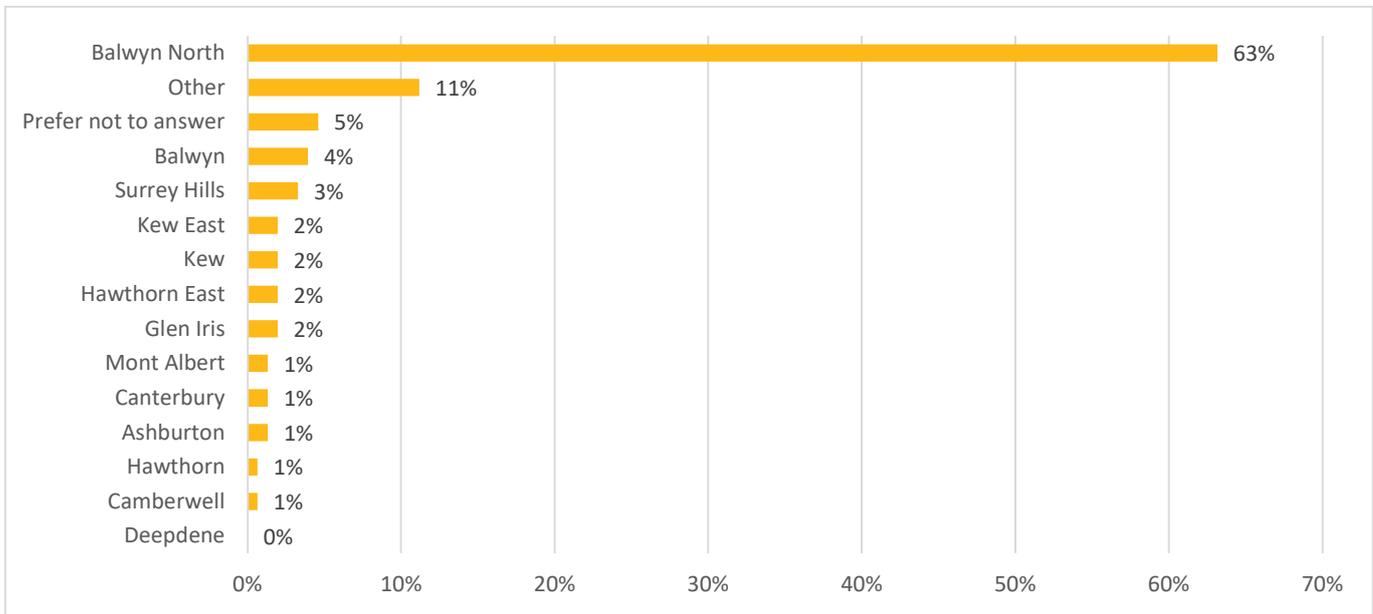


Figure 7777 Suburbs that participants live in (n=153)

3.2.5. How respondents heard about the consultation

As shown in Figure 8888, respondents reported how they heard about the consultation, reflecting the various channels used by Council to promote the consultation. Respondents reported hearing about the consultation through social media (27%) and the Engagement Boroondara (21%).

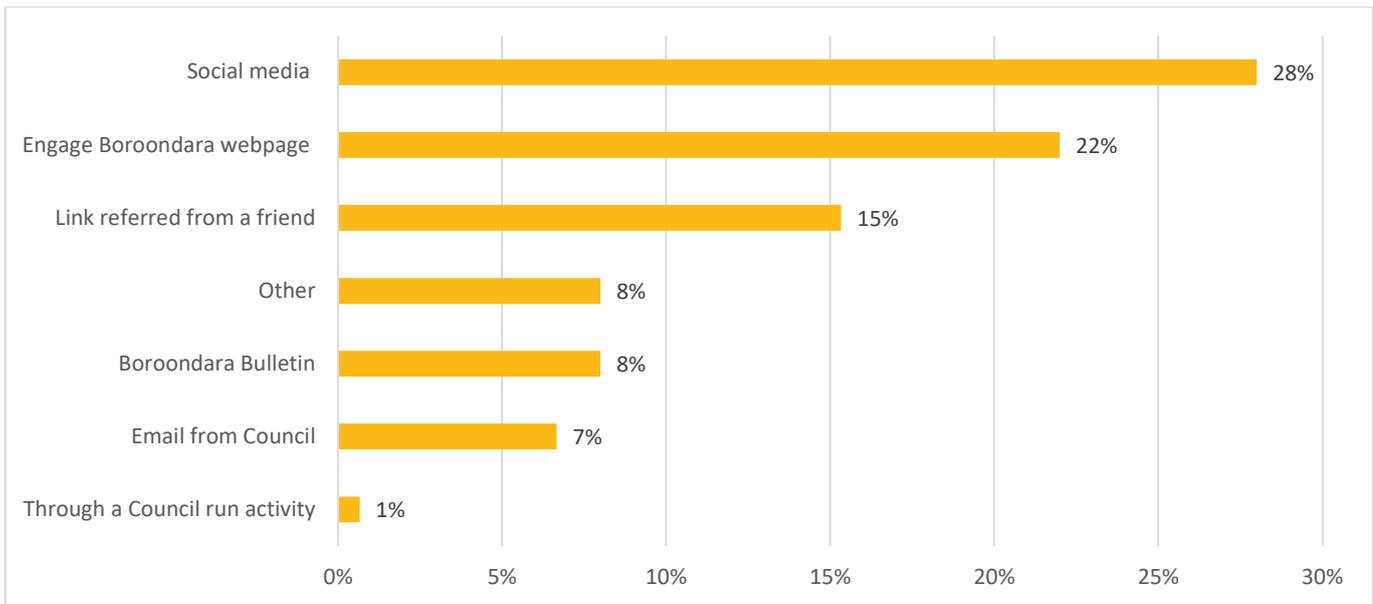


Figure 8888 'How did you hear about the project'? (n = 153)

3.3. Gender impact assessment

Gender can affect people's needs and experiences. This means that policies, programs and services can affect people of different genders in different ways. The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires local governments to conduct gender impact assessments so that all their new services, which directly and significantly impact the public, benefit all Victorians. Capire conducted a gender impact analysis on the survey results.

Overall, there was no significant gender difference in the sentiment across most survey questions.

Overall, both men and women provided similar reasons for improving safety, amenities and had similar concerns about the reduction of green open space.

Some slight differences can be observed in the following survey responses:

- Women were more likely than men to oppose to Council's position on **Paths Design** (17% of women compared to 10% of men).

- Women (35%) were more likely than Men (23%) to support Council's position on the **new nature play areas in the reserve**.
- Women were more opposed (23%) to Council's position on the **intermediate BMX track**, than men (15%)
- Men were more supportive or strongly supportive (80%) of Council's position on the **five km Parkrun route through the reserve** than Women (63%)
- Women were more supportive (46%) of the **removal of the dog beach at the wetland**, than men (37%)
- In the open-ended responses, men were more likely to comment on all-ability or age range play equipment or play areas. Women were more likely to comment on safety and natural features as well as water, shade, etc.
- In the open-ended responses, men were more likely to comment on features to minimise the impact of the freeway.
- In the open-ended responses, women were more likely to comment on additional comfort amenities such as water taps, seating and shading. and safety features such as lighting.

4. Community responses to proposed key features

This section reports on survey results and discussions at the pop-up and drop-in sessions in relation to the key features proposed in the concept design:

4.1 Mode separation

4.2 Water retention

4.3 Playgrounds and nature play

4.4 BMX tracks

4.5 Dog off-leash zones

4.6 Park run

4.7 Wetlands

4.8 Landscape and amenities

4.1. Mode separation

The survey asked people if they supported Council’s position: **‘Council does not support the inclusion of a shared user path. Council is advocating for a mode separated path to be included, even with the reduction of open space.’** The image (Figure 9) below was used to illustrate what a mode separated path looks like.



Figure 99999 An image included in the survey to show what mode separated path look like.

Most of the respondents were supportive of Council’s position to advocate for a mode separated path in the Reserve, with more than 81% respondents indicating strongly support (59%) or support (23%). Around 14% were not supportive of Council’s position, indicating they strongly oppose (8%) or oppose (6%), while 5% of respondents were neutral. Figure 10 shows the survey results.

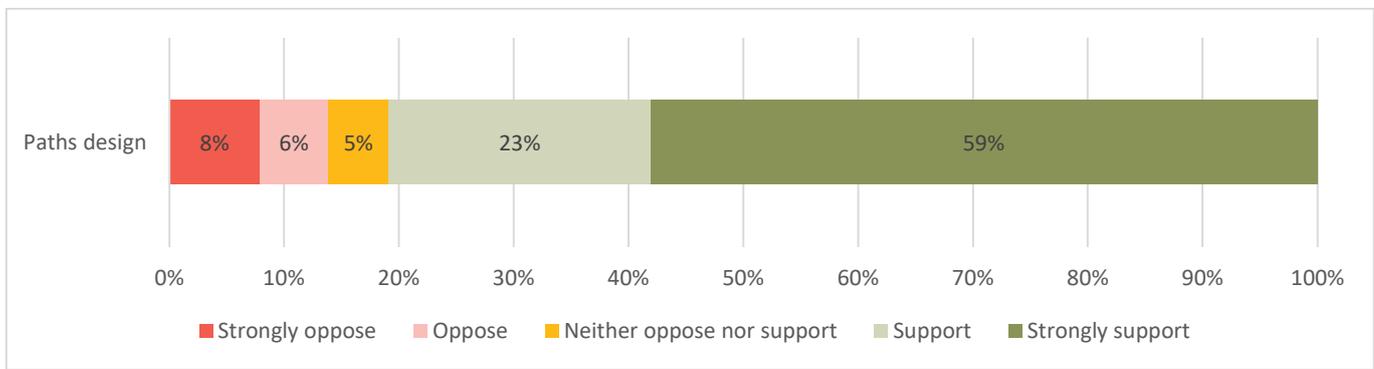


Figure 1010101010 Do you support Council’s position on mode separation? (n =152)

A total of 141 respondents provided reasons to their answers.

Reasons shared by respondents are summarised below:

REASONS FOR SUPPORT (114 RESPONSES)	REASONS FOR OPPOSITION (20 RESPONSES)	NEITHER SUPPORT NOR OPPOSE (7 RESPONSES)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most frequently mentioned reason was that mode separated paths would create a safer experience for all users, especially young children, elderly, and dog walkers. The existing mode separated paths in other areas work well. There is already a high volume of users on existing paths in the Reserve especially during peak hours and weekends. Mode separated paths would avoid risks of user conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most frequently mentioned reason was that mode separated paths would take up more space and use for concrete paving. One respondent was concerned that if they walk their dog with their children on the bike, their children will need to cycle 30 meters away unsupervised. Some respondents highlighted that this may reduce activity space or greening opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They can see both sides of the argument (taking up spaces vs safety). They felt that current path in the Reserve works well and may not need to change.

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

Participants at the in-person activities were supportive of council’s position on mode separation. Many who attended the first pop up were part of a regular dog walking group who described experiences of conflict with cyclists on current shared paths.

Several cyclists attended the drop-in session shared that the current shared paths did not provide adequate room for them to avoid pedestrians and dogs. This was particularly raised by cyclists who used the path for commuting to and from work. It was noted that they then to go at higher speeds than the average recreational rider.

4.2. Water retention

Prior to asking questions about the water retention feature, an explanation of the ‘past water course feature’ was given. The survey then asked people if they supported Council’s position: **‘Council does not support the occupation of the Koonung Creek Reserve for the purposes of retaining and treating water runoff from the Eastern Freeway and other roads. These features will occupy valuable open space and water could flow through an existing underground pipe with treatment and retention occurring further downstream.’**

Survey respondents were supportive of Council’s view to not occupy the reserve for the purposes of retaining and treating water runoff from the Eastern Freeway and other roads. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) indicated strong support (44%) or support (22%) for Council’s position. A total of 16% of respondents either strongly opposed (9%) or opposed (7%) Council’s position. 19% of respondents neither oppose nor support. Figure 11 shows the survey results.

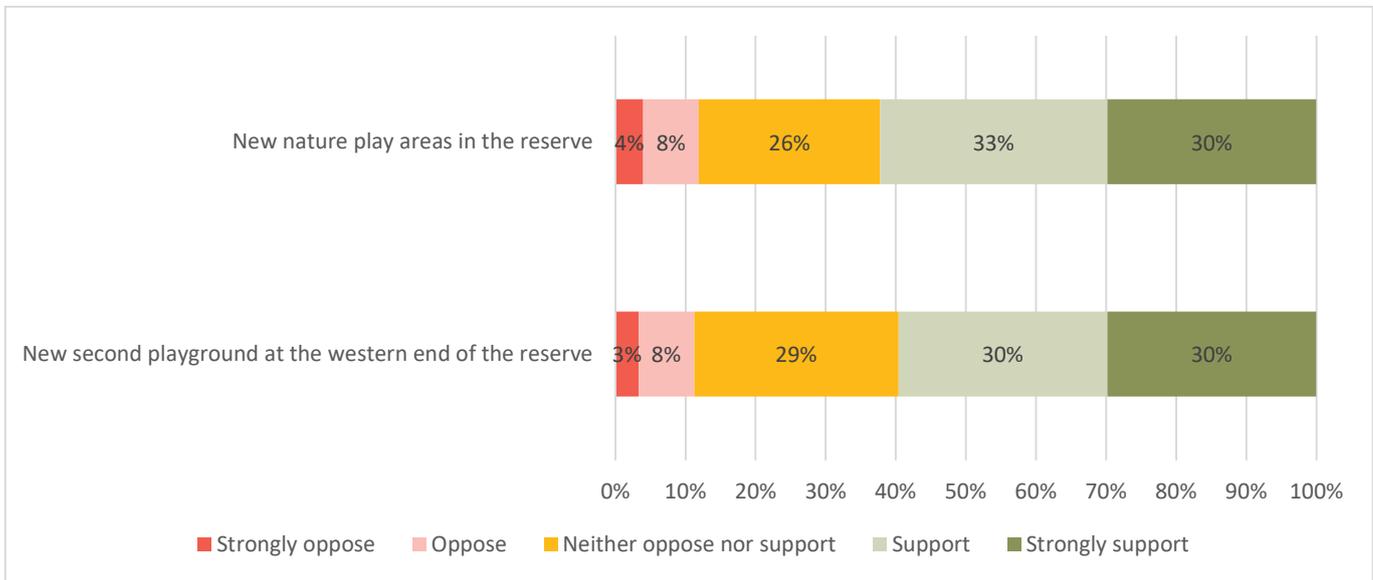


Figure 1212121212 Support for new nature play and second playground (n=153)

Other features that participants desired to see in the playground or nature play areas include:

- slides
- swings (including an all-ability swing for people in wheelchairs)
- monkey bars
- climbing spider frames
- sufficient shelter and shade

“A wide range of play equipment for all age groups. Good climbing equipment for a wide range of ages, slides and swings are important. As noted elsewhere, toilets are essential. Also a BBQ area to replace the existing area.” – Survey respondent

“Playground equipment targeted to children of different ages - toddler, preschool, primary school, challenging for pre-teens and young teens.” – Survey respondent

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

Participants at the pop-up session did not share many views about the inclusion of playgrounds or nature play in the reserve. The audience at this event were older and potentially would not be as impacted by this change as some other proposed changes. Less than five participants mentioned that they hoped to see more children and families using the park to encourage them to be active.

4.4. BMX Tracks

Majority of the survey respondents supported the inclusion of both a beginner (64%) and intermediate (55%) BMX track in the Koonung Creek Reserve. Those who are supportive of the inclusion of the BMX track would like to encourage children and teenagers to be more active, and believe the track needs to be well designed for it to attract users.

A small number of respondents who did not support the BMX track design were concerned that the BMX track may negatively impact the natural environment and biodiversity of the reserve. Figure 13 shows the survey results.

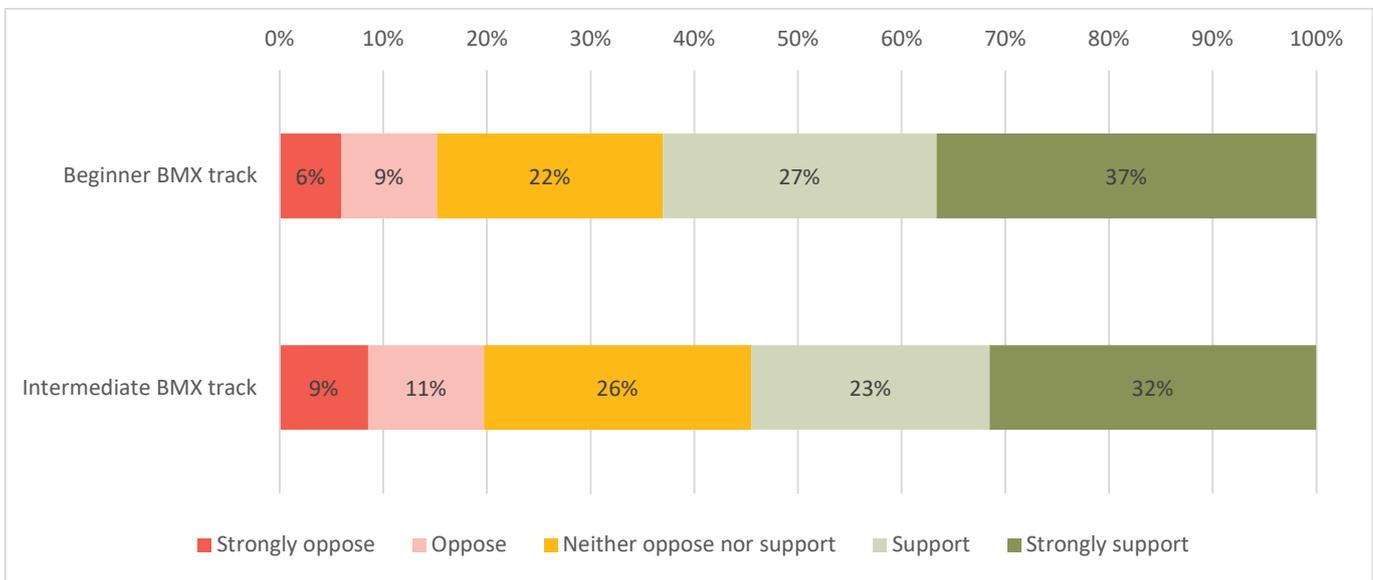


Figure 13 Support for inclusion of a beginner and intermediate BMX track (n=153)

“Kids will build jumps as they have done in the area unless a properly maintained or sculpted facility is provided. Look at Hill n Dale in Glen Iris for a reference point to a previous Boroondara Council success story. This stops kids digging up the park in other areas, it would be great addition.” – Survey respondent

“BMX track if done needs to be done well with good consultation taking on board and implementing feedback from users. If design is poor it will not be used and become an eyesore. If done well it would be a terrific addition to a great parkland.” – Survey respondent

“The BMX tracks if well designed would hopefully mean that BMX riders would stop creating their own jumps in the treed area... and provide teenagers and others somewhere to be active.”- Survey respondent

There was no specific feedback made about the BMX tracks at the in-person sessions.

4.5. Dog off-leash zones

Less than half (40%), supported the inclusion of two fenced dog parks (one for small and one for large dogs). This is consistent with discussion at the pop-up. In contrast, 33% do not support the inclusion of two dog parks. A relatively high proportion of people (29%) neither oppose nor support. The survey did not ask participants to provide further comments.

More than half of survey respondents support the inclusion of a new fenced dog park (67%).

40% of respondents indicated they supported or strongly supported the removal of the dog beach at the wetlands, while 36% strongly oppose or oppose the removal. Figure 14 shows the survey results.

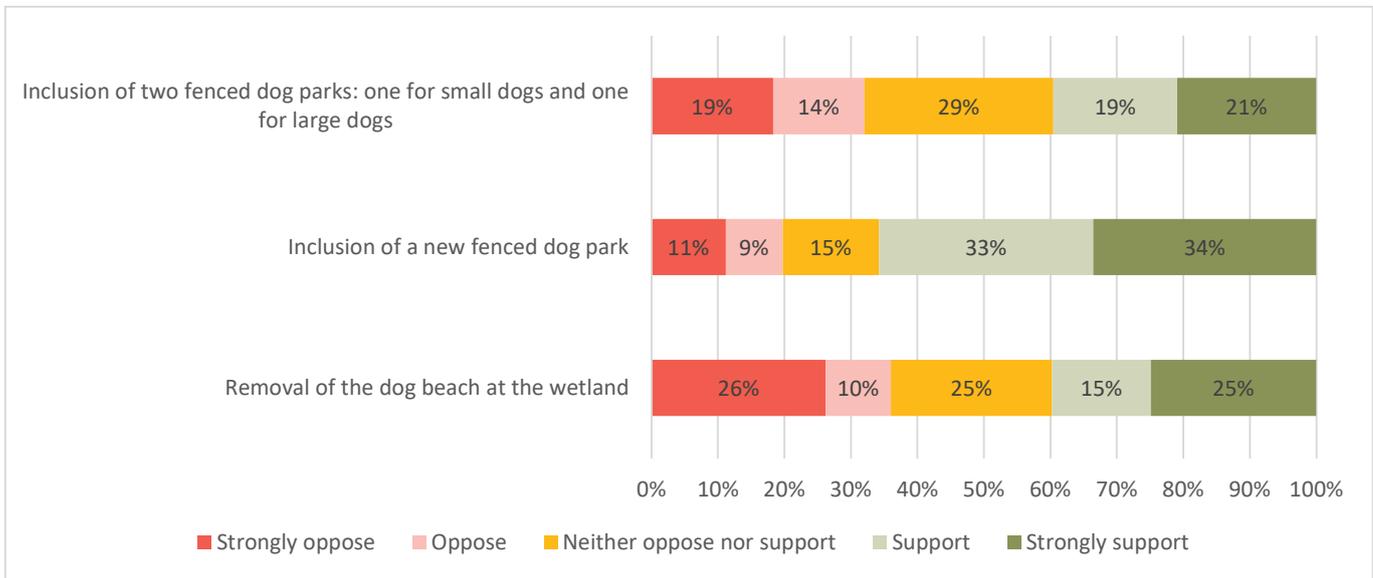


Figure 1414141414 Questions relating to dog off-leash zones at Koonung Creek Reserve (n=153)

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

The feedback from the survey and the in-person events indicated this is a divisive issue for those who are regular users of Koonung Creek Reserve. Further clarity is needed on whether the removal of the dog beach at the wetland will also mean the removal of the dog off-leash zones in the rest of Koonung Creek Reserve. Capire suggests that further consultation is needed on this issue.

4.6. Park run

A total of 71% of survey respondents were supportive of the inclusion of a parkrun track in Koonung Creek Reserve, with 22% neither supporting nor opposing the inclusion. Figure 15 shows the survey results.

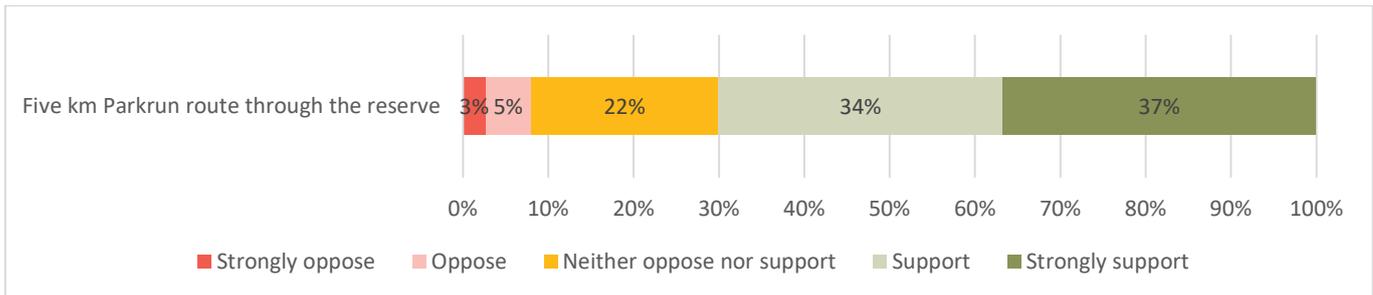


Figure 1515151515 Support for 5km Parkrun route through the reserve (n=153)

Feedback relating to the Parkrun route includes:

“This area is popular for runners, this route could be popular between Studley Park and Westerfolds Park if sufficient volunteers and participants.” – Survey respondent

“To support a 5 km track for Parkrun, the design requires a shelter, access to water, toilets and a loop or out and back track ending back at the shelter.” – Survey respondent

“I oppose a Parkrun route. The park should be primarily for passive recreation, not organised sports/businesses using public space to make a profit.” – Survey respondent

Feedback received from in-person sessions:

At the pop-up and drop-in session, participants were generally supportive of the park run idea. One participant mentioned that the mode-separation on the paths would assist in making this safer if it was to go ahead.

4.7. Wetlands

BIRD HIDE

More than half (58%) of the respondents were supportive of the inclusion of the bird hide at the wetlands. 28% neither opposed nor supported it, and 15% opposed or strongly opposed. Figure 16 shows the survey results.

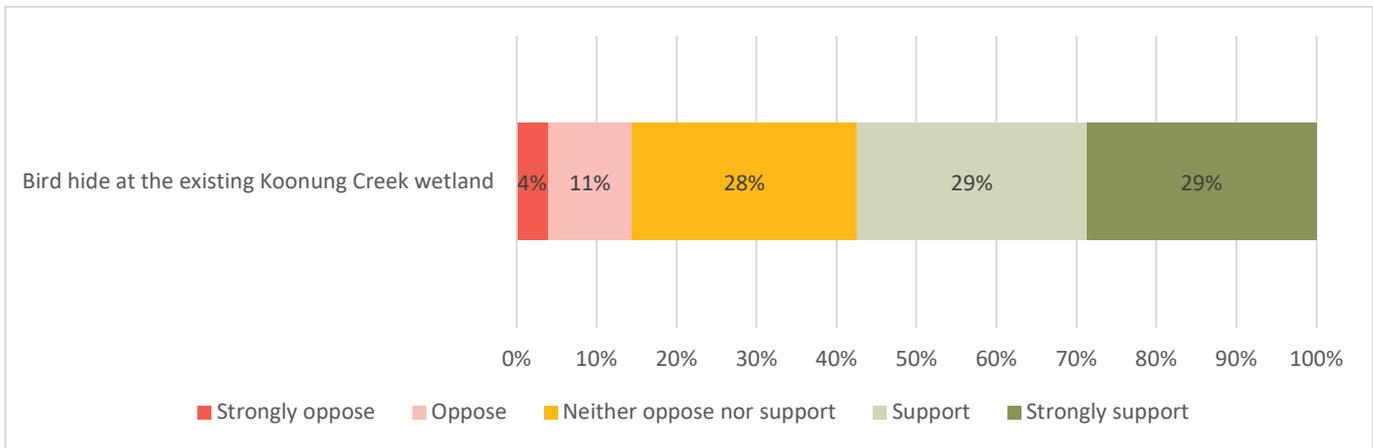


Figure 16 Support for a bird hide at the existing Koonung Creek wetland (n=153)

Considerations shared at the in-person events and in free-text survey comments include:

- a few participants were concerned a bird hide could attract anti-social behaviour, as it will be in a secluded part of the park.
- a few participants felt that the bird hide will be unnecessary as it will take years for the birds to return to the area after widening of the Eastern Freeway and it does not seem to be good use of public funding.
- there were participants that supported the bird hide, as long as it did not require the removal of the dog beach at the wetlands.

“Like the idea of giving bird lovers the option to observe birds without disturbing them.” – survey respondent

“Low-key facilities such as bird hides are useful and provide opportunities for the community to observe birds and other wildlife.” – survey respondent

“Bird hide doesn't seem like a good use of funding - not enough people will use it.” – survey respondent

“A bird hide is unnecessary when there are and will be seats around the wetlands.” – survey respondent.

RELAXATION AND QUIET ZONE

The majority of survey respondents (79%) are supportive of the inclusion of a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo. Figure 17 shows the survey results.

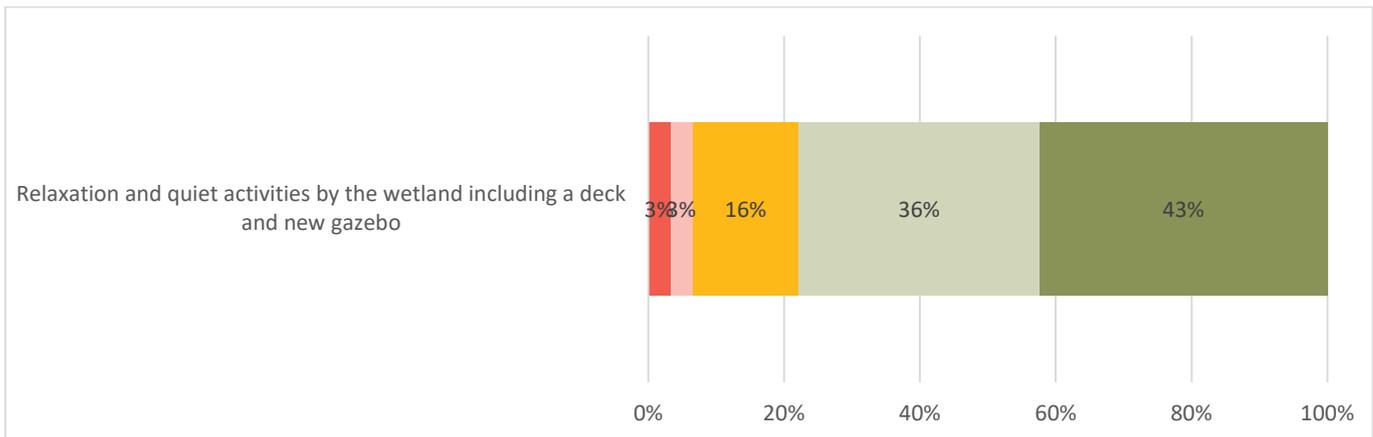


Figure 17 Support for relaxation and quiet activities by the wetland (n=153)

4.8. Landscape and amenities

The survey did not ask directly about the landscape features nor amenities at the Koonung Creek Reserve, however many respondents shared views about trees, biodiversity corridors, seating, toilets, lighting, water/drinking fountains, exercise equipment in their free-text comments. Their views, and the views of participants at the pop-up and drop-in discussions have been included below.

Unstructured nature

A few participants at the pop-up and drop-in session shared their desire for the Koonung Creek Reserve to remain 'untouched' and not become too 'manicured' or 'artificial'. Many participants shared that the relatively 'wild' or unstructured nature of the reserve is what makes the reserve special, and that they did not desire for this to change. This was a common sentiment from those who attended in-person events and in the open-ended survey responses.

"What is missing is natural bushland that strengthens reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait First Nation peoples." – Survey respondent

Removal of mature trees

Some expressed concerns about the removal of the mature trees during the construction period, and that replacing these with saplings would mean that the Reserve would take years to return to its current state.

"Mature trees will be removed for the freeway extension. It is only fair to have mature trees planted at the beginning. Otherwise, it will take decades for the young trees to grow back. The mature trees will act as natural noise dampeners too." – Survey respondent

Noise walls impacting vegetation growth

Another concern shared by pop-up participants was the height of the noise walls through the reserve, and the impact this may have on the vegetation growing underneath due to a shadowing effect. The type of planting that will occur along the noise walls will need to take this into account, considering both the impact of shading as well as the impact of a rain shadow which may mean those plants receive less water.

Biodiversity corridor

Participants felt that the role of the reserve as a biodiversity corridor was important. A few residents raised concerns about the displacement of wildlife during construction.

"We already have ducks coming to our swimming pool. We wonder what would happen to the wildlife during construction; they have nowhere to go." – Drop-in session participant

Lighting

Many participants shared that they would like better lighting throughout, particularly along the main Koonung Creek Trail.

E-bike charging stations

Some participants shared that they would like a solar-powered charging station that could be used for e-bikes.

Bins

Participants suggested the inclusion of more bins along the pathway and at key intersections to allow people to drop off dog litter bags given the Reserve's popularity as a dog walking area.

Exercise equipment

There was clear support for exercise equipment to be retained in the park and that this equipment is currently used by many.

"I'd like more adult exercise equipment...I use these, as do many of us, every day and it's my main fitness routine, as it is for many." – Survey respondent

Flexi-space

One person suggested to remove the fixed seating from the current shelter/gazebo design to increase the flexibility of this space. For example, this could suit the use of a Tai Chi group that regularly uses the park, and may need a sheltered open space. It was noted by some participants that the Tai Chi Group uses the gazebo at the wetland every morning between 9am and 10am.

Seats

A few participants desired for more seats and benches in the reserve.

"I would also like to see a lot more benches and benches/tables for picnics and some seats in shaded areas. Not everyone who uses the trail is fit and can walk for long periods without a rest." – Survey respondent

“Ensure there are lots of benches, including some in shaded spots. There are too few benches now and some are unshaded. Also, water stations would be ideal for people to fill drink bottles, rehydrate and water their pets. It would be beneficial to have lighting along the path to increase usability in the evening - particularly when the days are shorter.” – Survey respondent

Further feedback on these features in each zone are included in Section 5 of this report.

5. Community workshop responses to the five zones

A total of 12 people participated in a one-hour community workshop. During the workshop, participants were guided to review the existing conditions plans and the draft concept design. They were then divided into smaller groups to share their feedback on the draft concept design by zones. This section summarises their feedback by zone.

5.1.1. Overall comments

Participants made general comments on the overall concept design. These comments were not related to a particular zone:

- Participants were generally concerned that 20% of the park will be taken by NELP.
- General agreement that mode separation makes it safer for cyclists and pedestrians. However participants noted that pedestrians will not walk closer to the road, have them be on the inside of the reserve.
- General acceptance of the inclusion of the BMX track but noting that it would compromise open space. There were suggestions to fence in the BMX track area.
- There were suggestions to fenced off the playgrounds to ensure safety of children.
- There was preference for an extra path along the top northern edge to replace the water retention feature.
- Participants noted that there is a reduction in utility in this design with no access behind the wetland. They suggested there should still be a path access behind this area (with a gravel path).
- Participants noted that the Tai Chi group use the gazebo every morning and suggested that it should be a sheltered space for Tai Chi users.
- Desire for the dog beach, exercise equipment and the Bee Hotel to be retained.
- Suggestion to include interpretive signage in the reserve.
- Regarding dog activities, there were suggestions to separate path for dog walkers in the northern part of the reserve; and a general comment that separating small and big dogs may not be worthwhile.

The following sub-sections provided participants' feedback by zones. Participants were asked to comment on the zone maps and indicate their comments on a specific location. Where comments are specific to a location, they are numbered on the map, with a 'key' to detail their comments.

5.1.2. Zone 1 and 2



Numbered item (in orange):

1. Seat should be placed here at the western area, near Mountain View Rd entrance facing east
2. Exercise equipment should be placed here in the west near the playground
3. Add in bike racks here near the BMX area

Figure 1818181818 Image of Zone 1 of Koonung Creek Reserve Draft Concept Design with annotation



Figure 1919191919 Image of Zone 2 of Koonung Creek Reserve Concept Design

General comments provided on Zone 1 and 2:

- Concerns about inundation area and if modelling has been done including the increased impermeability of the freeway and impacts of climate change.
- Desire for the exercise equipment to be retained.
- Seating should be close to the playground.
- Secondary path is good as it will provide an alternative for dog walkers than the main path.
- Supportive of the fenced off-leash dog park but concerned that this would change the off-leash status of the rest of the park.
- A participants suggested that a big and small dog parks would not work, but having some small fenced areas that dogs can use if they are overwhelmed ('dog escape rooms') would be good.
- Supportive of public toilet at Balwyn Rd.
- Some participants felt they do not need as many nature play areas plotted along the reserve; and emphasised that they should not be placed the dog park.

General comments for consideration:

- Increase the size of the concrete pads for furniture including space for a pram or bike to sit next to the bench.
- There is a lack of drinking fountains in the plans for this zone – people are coming into the park, or leaving it here so there needs to be water. Participants suggested this be located at node intersections.
- Signage and wayfinding for facilities needs to be included in the design.
- Consider secondary gravel paths for dog walkers instead of the water retention creek bed.
- Encourage pollinators with wildflowers. Support the opportunity to revegetate Zone 5, towards the Doncaster Rd end, as it is a throughfare and would not require much open space.
- Suggestion to relocate the bin to entrances (eg Wandeen Street entrance)
- Preference for open space over dry creek bed/water retention.

5.2. Feedback relating to NELP overall / out of scope feedback

During the consultation the community offered feedback not within the scope of Koonung Creek Reserve concept design or related to the NELP in general. This section summarises these comments.

Noise walls

Community members at the in-person events raised concerns about the height of the noise walls and the construction materials. A concern is that without adequate lighting, the noise walls may make the park feel unsafe or unfriendly, particularly at night. Some were also concerned the noise walls would create a light and rain shadow, affecting vegetation planted closer to it. A handful of survey participants strongly emphasised the need for the noise wall to extend along the freeway, with particular mention that that the noise wall design according to VicRoads' standard is inadequate for residents and park users.

Cycling connections

The bicycle freeway being built between Hoddle St and the Chandler Highway means that there will be more commuters using this route to travel in/out of the city. Several participants shared a desire for better future proofing of the bike trail and connections to ensure that it can meet the demand, including the bike path meeting a width of 4m wide to ensure there is room for faster riders to overtake novice riders.

Future pollution and ventilation shaft

Concerns were shared in the survey comments and in-person at events about the level of pollution that will result from the widening of the Eastern Freeway. Several community members also shared concern about the design of the 'ventilation stack' that will be built as part of the widening.

"My concern is encouraging exercise in the parkland when NELP Air Pollution from PM2.5 and NO2 are predicted in the NELP EES to breach the "project" PM2.5 safe limits. This is a serious health concern, particularly near schools like Marcellin, Carey, Trinity & Belle Vue PS." – Survey respondent

6. Conclusion

During this consultation period, over 3,200 people were reached through the project website (available in English and Simplified Chinese), 153 completed a survey, 36 people participated in a pop-up or drop-in session, and 12 participated in a community workshop to provide detailed responses.

Features that received over 80% support:

- Council's position to advocate for a mode separated path in the Reserve (81% support)
- The inclusion of a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)

Features that received over 50% support:

- Provide a park run route (71% support)
- Include a relaxation and quiet activity zone by the wetland, including a deck and new gazebo (79% support)
- Include a new fenced dog park (67% support)
- Council's position to oppose the past water course feature (66% support)
- Include a new nature play area (63% support) and a new second playground at the western end of the reserve (60%)
- Include a beginner BMX track in the reserve (64% support)
- Include a bird hide at the wetlands (58% support)
- Include an intermediate BMX track in the reserve (55% support)

Features that received mixed views / no clear majority were:

- The removal of the dog beach at the wetlands (40% support; 36% oppose)
- Include two fenced dog parks (40% support; 33% oppose).

Council may consider undertaking further consultation on dog-related features. In relation to the water retention feature, one-fourth of the respondents did not understand the proposed feature. Further information and education could be provided to build community understanding.

Throughout the consultation, comments were made about the North East Link Project in general, the noise walls, and concerns about air pollution, ventilation, and disruption during construction.

Appendix – Survey questions

Section 1: Open space and connecting pathways

Paths design

The current design from NELP features the Koonung Creek Trail as a shared user path. This is the same set-up as existing and means that walkers, dog walkers and cyclists will share the path. This is not currently aligned with Boroondara’s Bicycle Strategy, which advocates for mode separated paths where possible to improve the walking and cycling experience, as well as safety for all pedestrians, dog walkers and cyclists.

Over 80% of those who answered our previous survey in May 2022 told us they prefer mode separated walking and cycling paths instead of shared paths. Including mode separated paths will mean a reduction in the amount of open space available.

1. **Rate your level of support for Council’s position:** *‘Council does not support the inclusion of a shared user path. Council is advocating for a mode separated path to be included, even with the reduction of open space.’*

Likert scale from 1-5: strongly oppose, oppose, neither support nor oppose, support, strongly support

2. **Tell us why you chose that answer.**

Section 2: Water retention features

Koonung Creek Reserve features an existing wetland which is highly valued by the community. You can see this wetland in the existing conditions plan and the concept design.

NELP’s concept design proposes additional and permanent water retention ponds and a ‘representation of the past water course’ to treat water from the surrounding road catchment and the Eastern Freeway. The ‘representation of past water course’ is a wide rock-lined 1.5m drain through most of the reserve with minimal planting and likely with stagnant water. The water features will occupy useable public open space as well as areas that could be planted with trees adjacent to the freeway and noise walls.

3. **Rate your level of support for Council’s position:**

‘Council does not support the occupation of the Koonung Creek Reserve for the purposes of retaining and treating water runoff from the Eastern Freeway and other roads. These features will occupy valuable open space and water could flow through an existing underground pipe with treatment and retention occurring further downstream.’

Likert scale from 1-5: strongly oppose, oppose, neither support nor oppose, support, strongly support

4. **Tell us why you chose that answer (open-ended)**

Section 3: Features and community facilities by zone

The following features have been proposed to be included in the concept design. Please indicate your level of support for each one. Please note seating, picnic tables, water fountains, bicycle repair stations and exercise equipment will also be featured in the reserve.

	Strongly oppose	Somewhat oppose	Neither support nor oppose	Somewhat support	Strongly support
A new second playground at the western end of the reserve					
New nature play areas in the reserve					
A new public toilet at the western end of the reserve					
A beginner BMX track					
An intermediate BMX track					
An area for relaxation and quiet activities by the wetland					

including a deck and new gazebo					
A 5-km park run route through the reserve					
A bird hide at the existing Koonung Creek wetland.					

5. **Do you want to provide any further information as to why you chose your answers above? (open-ended)**
6. **What equipment or features would you like to see in the new playground and nature play area? (open-ended)**
7. **Have we missed any features or amenities you'd like to see in the Reserve? (open-ended)**

Section 3: Dog activity areas

8. The concept design proposes that the dog beach at the wetland is removed to provide improved habitat for native birds and create a quiet area for birdwatching and relaxation. A new fenced dog park will be added for puppies and dogs not yet under effective voice control so they can play off leash.

Please indicate your level of support for the following (strongly oppose to strongly support)

- a. Removal of dog beach at the wetland
- b. Inclusion of a new fenced dog park
- c. Inclusion of two fenced dog parks – one for small dogs and one for large dogs
-

Part 2: About you

1. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-84
- 85 or above
- Prefer not to answer

2. What is your gender?

- Woman
- Man
- Self-described, please specify:
- Prefer not to answer

3. Please select the option(s) which best describes you. You may select more than one.

- I live near Koonung Creek Reserve
- I work near Koonung Creek Reserve
- I go to school near Koonung Creek Reserve
- I use the walking or bike paths in Koonung Creek Reserve
- I exercise in Koonung Creek Reserve
- I use the BMX/mountain bike track
- I exercise my dog in Koonung Creek Reserve
- I teach/work at a school or childcare centre near Koonung Creek Reserve
- I am a member of a community group that uses Koonung Creek Reserve (please share the group's name: ____)
- Other: Please tell us how you use Koonung Creek Reserve

4. What suburb do you live in?

- Ashburton
- Balwyn

- Balwyn North
- Camberwell
- Canterbury
- Deepdene
- Glen Iris
- Hawthorn
- Hawthorn East
- Kew
- Kew East
- Mont Albert
- Surrey Hills
- Other:
- Prefer not to answer

5. How did you hear about the consultation?

- a. Engage Boroondara webpage
- b. Boroondara Bulletin
- c. Email from Council
- d. Link referred from a friend
- e. Social media
- f. Through a Council run activity
- g. Other

6. Would you like to be contacted with the results of the survey, next steps and any further information on the Koonung Creek Reserve? If yes, please provide your email address (open-ended)

Capire Consulting Group
The Commons,
Wurundjeri Country
36-38 Gipps Street,
Collingwood VIC 3066
(03) 9285 9000

info@capire.com.au
capire.com.au

Capire acknowledges
and deeply respects the Wurundjeri
people and
the Traditional Owners
of the Victorian land.



capire