CLARKE RESERVE PLAY SPACE UPGRADE

Engagement Summary Report

July 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

Wominjeka. Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their legacy and spiritual connection to the land and waterways across the City of Port Phillip and pay our heartfelt respect to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

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Executive Summary

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This report summarises what we did to inform community members about the Clarke Reserve project, and what we heard from the community during the engagement period from 1 -28 June 2026.

WHAT DID WE ASK?

In this second round of community engagement we were seeking community feedback on the proposed concept plan.

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

Most participants who told us how they felt about the draft concept plan overall told us they liked it. Nearly a quarter were neutral and nearly a quarter said they didn't like it.

Many participants told us about how they thought the upgrades would benefit community members. We also received many comments on specific changes participants wanted to see. Some participants said they thought the upgrades weren't necessary or they wanted the reserve to remain as it is.

Comments from participants commonly highlighted the following issues:

- fencing and separation of dogs and other users
- safety and security
- variety of play equipment and opportunities
- use of the space by adults and the broader community.

Introduction

Project background

Clarke Reserve has been identified as a high-priority site for a playground upgrade, with most of the current play equipment dating to 2005. Assessments have shown that the current playground performs poorly in key areas such as safety, accessibility and inclusiveness, highlighting the need for improvement.

Located within Elwood's public open space network and close to Elwood Primary School, Clarke Reserve is an important community space used by local families, children and visitors. An upgrade presents an opportunity to create a more diverse and engaging play environment that caters to a wider range of ages, abilities and recreational interests. The project could also improve accessibility and provide additional community facilities, such as seating, picnic tables and barbeque areas, to encourage social connection and longer visits to the reserve.

Clarke Reserve is also a designated dog off-leash area. Community feedback gathered during consultation for Council's Dog Off-Leash Guidelines identified concerns about the limited separation between off-leash dogs and playground users. Similar concerns were heard when Council invited community ideas for the play space upgrades in 2025. As part of the upgrade, a fence is planned to be installed around the play space to better separate the playground and the dog off-leash area, improving safety, comfort and enjoyment for all users.

What we set out to achieve

In this second round of community engagement from 1 to 28 June 2026 we were seeking community feedback on the proposed concept plan.

About this report

This report summarises what we did to inform community members about this project, and what we heard from the community during the engagement period from 1 -28 June 2026.

Before reading this report

The following should be considered in reading this report:

- The findings are based on qualitative feedback from people who chose to take part. This means the views shared are not statistically representative of the whole community and may only reflect a portion of local voices.
- While we aim to include diverse perspectives, some community members may have faced barriers to participation, including people with disability, multicultural communities, older people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Participants refers to everyone involved in the engagement; respondents refers to those who answered a specific question or activity.
- The report summarises what we heard. Feedback has not been independently verified, so some comments may be incorrect, unachievable or outside the project scope. Not all individual comments are shown; themes, quotes and numbers are used to reflect the range of views.
- Some people may have contributed more than once across different activities, which may result in unintentional double-counting.
- Demographic data was not collected consistently across all activities, which limits our ability to analyse differences between groups.
- The report covers Council-led engagement activities only and does not include community-run or third-party events, surveys or petitions.
- This report was developed through a combination of human analysis and artificial intelligence (AI). Human analysts conducted the primary data analysis. AI tools were used to process and analyse large datasets, identify trends, and generate some preliminary findings. Any AI-generated findings were subsequently reviewed, validated, and interpreted by human analysts with expertise in the subject matter. The final conclusions and interpretations

presented in this report represent the considered judgment of these human analysts, even where AI contributed to the data processing.

What we did

Between 1 -28 June 2026 we let the community know about this project and collected feedback through a mix of engagement activities.

Communications activities

To increase awareness of the engagement process, we did the following:

Onsite signs	Signs announcing the engagement and the opportunity to provide feedback were installed at three locations in Clarke Reserve.
Postcards x 1714	Postcards were distributed to the local community, explaining the engagement process and inviting people to provide feedback.
Emails	Emails were sent to schools, kindergartens and playgroups near Clarke Reserve, inviting them to share the opportunity for feedback with their communities. Emails were also sent to the 18 people who followed this project in the previous round of engagement.
Newsletters	Project information and an invitation to engage was included in the 19 June edition of Council's *Help Shape Our City* newsletter, sent to 4,692 subscribers.
Social media posts	Social media posts were included on both Facebook and Instagram on 1 June 2026 to promote the engagement process. The Facebook post received 2,401 views, 12 interactions and 22 link clicks. The Instagram post received 3,007 views, 20 interactions and 4 link clicks.

'Have your say' website	Council's dedicated engagement website, 'Have your say' included a page for this project, with information on the process, a timeline, contact details, and opportunities to engage.

Engagement activities

To collect feedback from the community we did the following activities:

Survey **38**	Our survey collected feedback on the proposal for Clarke Reserve as well as demographic details about participants.
Uploaded feedback **4**	Community members, groups and organisations were able to provide written submissions to the project team via email and via upload to the Have Your Say webpage.
Neighbourhood Pop-ups x 2	To reach community members using the play space who may not otherwise participate, we held two pop-up events at Clarke Reserve on these dates: • 10 am to 12 midday, Sunday 14 June 2026 • 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm, Thursday 18 June 2026. Participants were invited to hear about the project, discuss with a staff member or complete a survey.

Who we heard from

Demographics

Through our surveys and at pop-up events, we asked questions about participants' demographic details. Of the total 75 participants, 63 shared their demographic information with us. The following section explores those demographics.

GENDER

Of the 63 people who provided their gender, the amount who identified as female (40 respondents or 63%) was slightly higher than the amount who identified as male (23 respondents or 37%). No respondents said they were non-binary or used a different term.

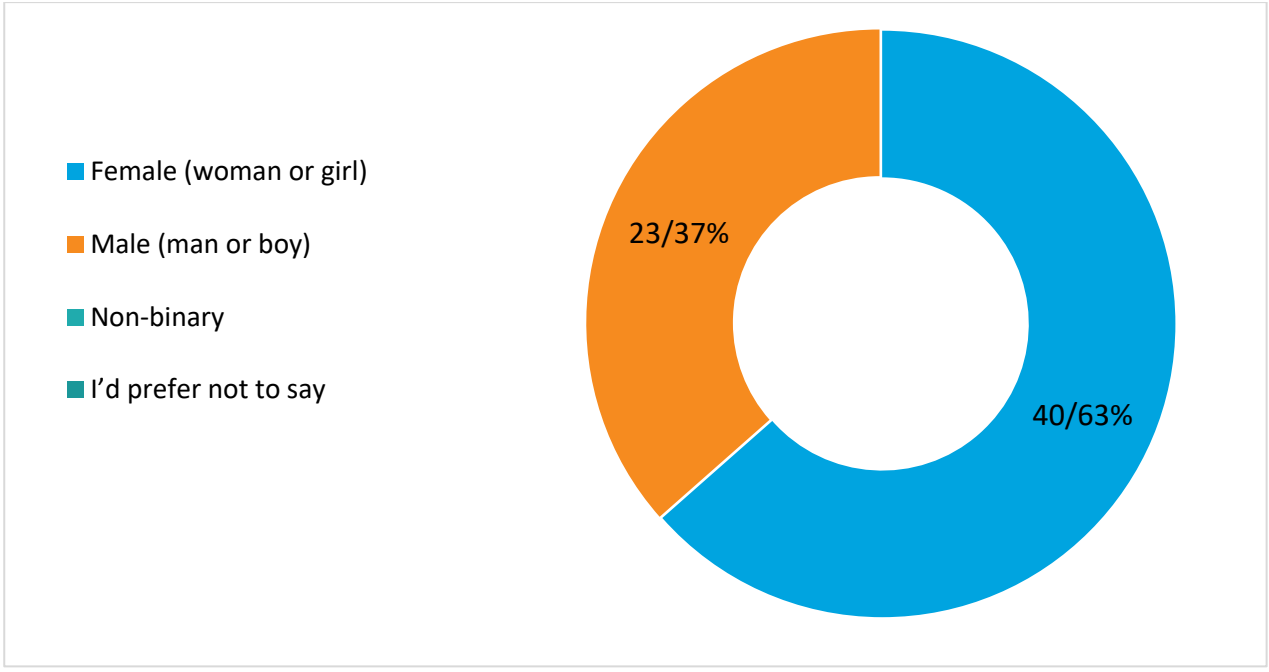


Figure 1: Number of respondents by gender (number of respondents=63)

SUBURB

60 respondents (93%) said they lived in Elwood. Other respondents said they lived in Balaclava, St Kilda or St Kilda East (1 respondent or 2% each).

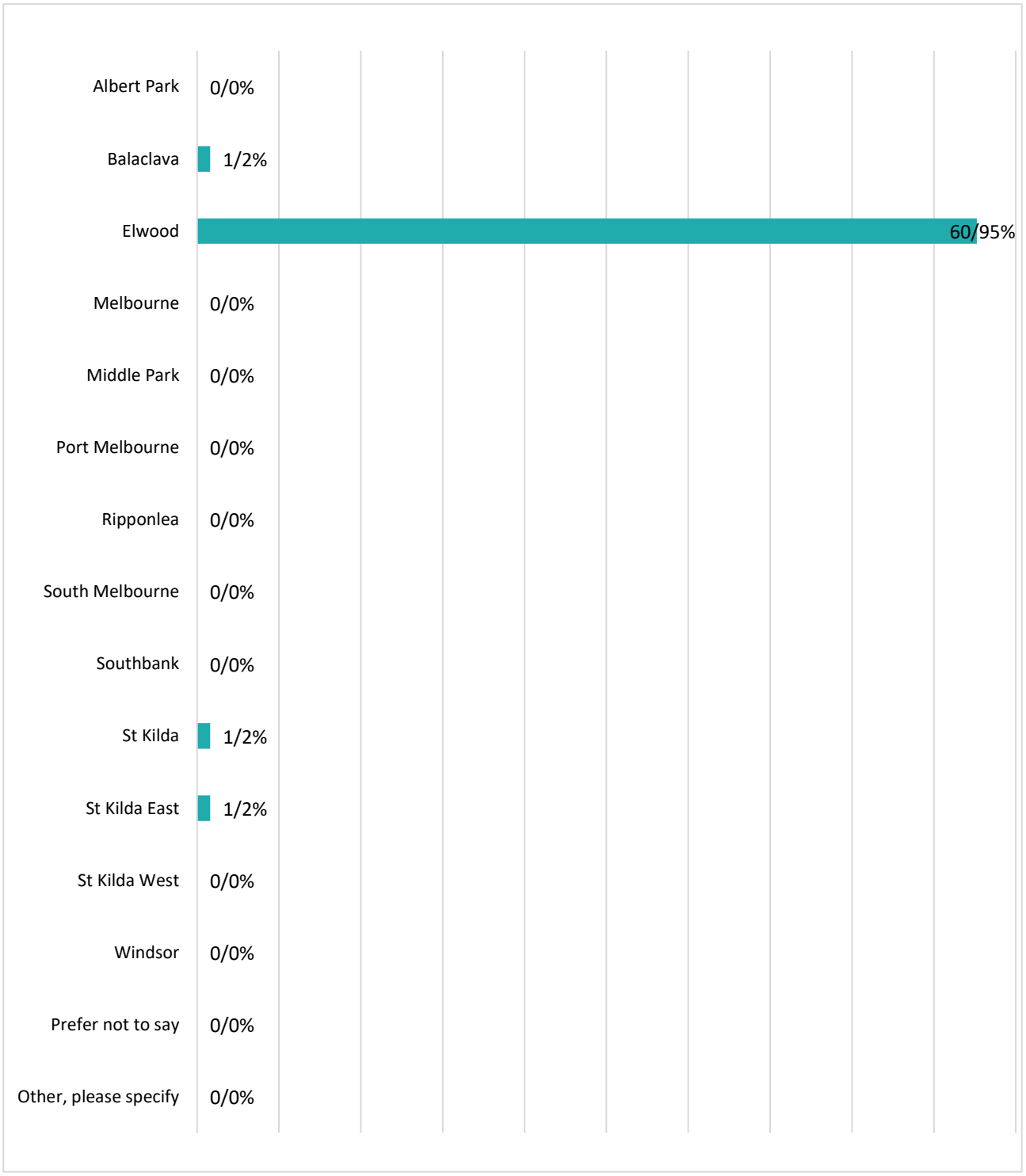


Figure 2: Number of respondents by suburb (number of respondents=63)

AGE

The highest represented age group was people aged between 50 and 59 years who made up or 25% of the respondents (16 respondents).

Another large cohort were the 15 respondents who said they were between 35 and 49 years (24%). This was closely followed by the 13 respondents who said they were between 70 and 84 years (21%). We received feedback from 4 children under the age of 15.

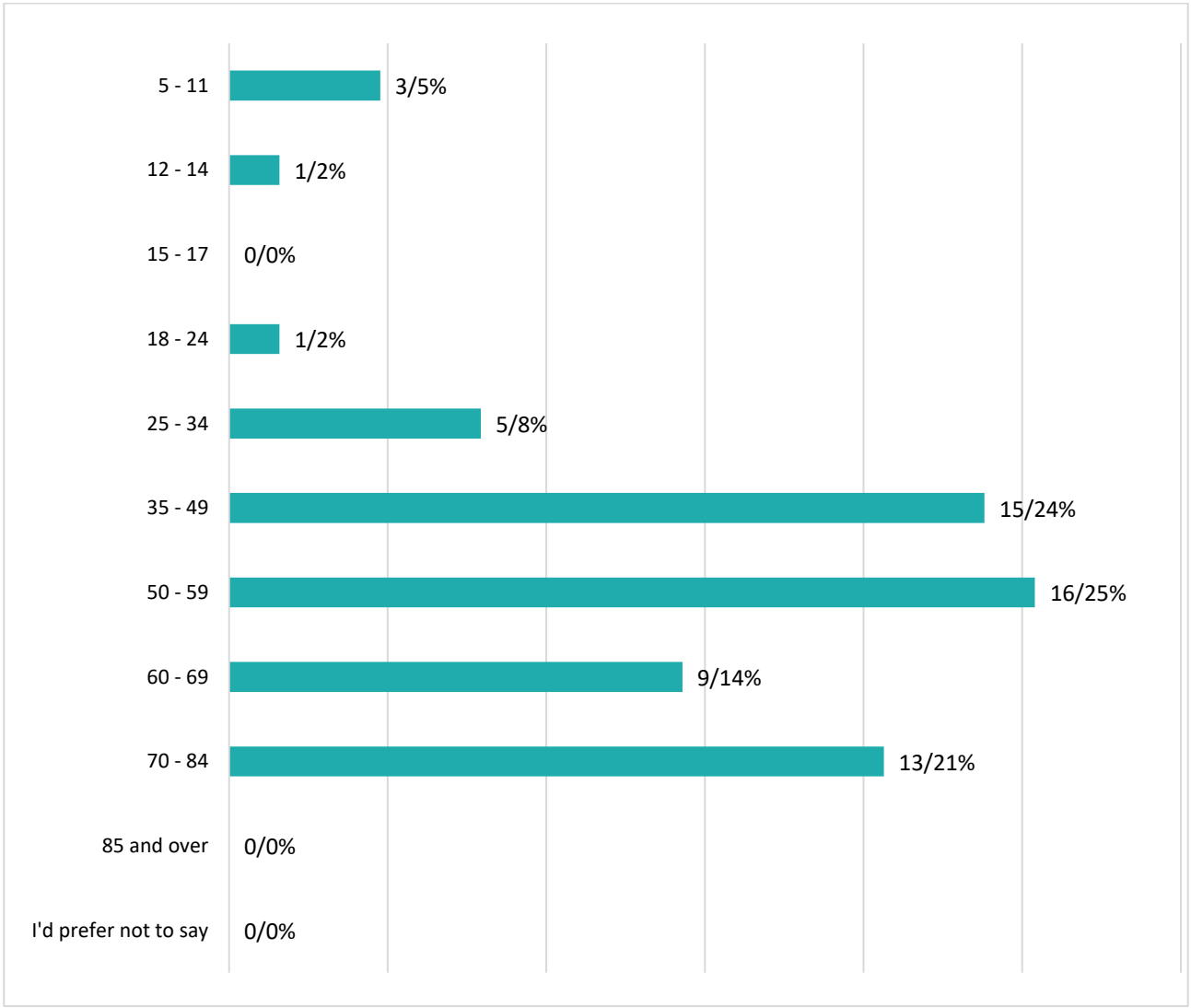


Figure 3: Number of respondents by age (number of respondents=63)

CHILDREN

We asked parents how old their children were. The highest represented age group was people aged 18+ who made up or 31% of the respondents (16 respondents). Another large cohort were the 14 respondents who said they were between 6 and 12 years (27%).

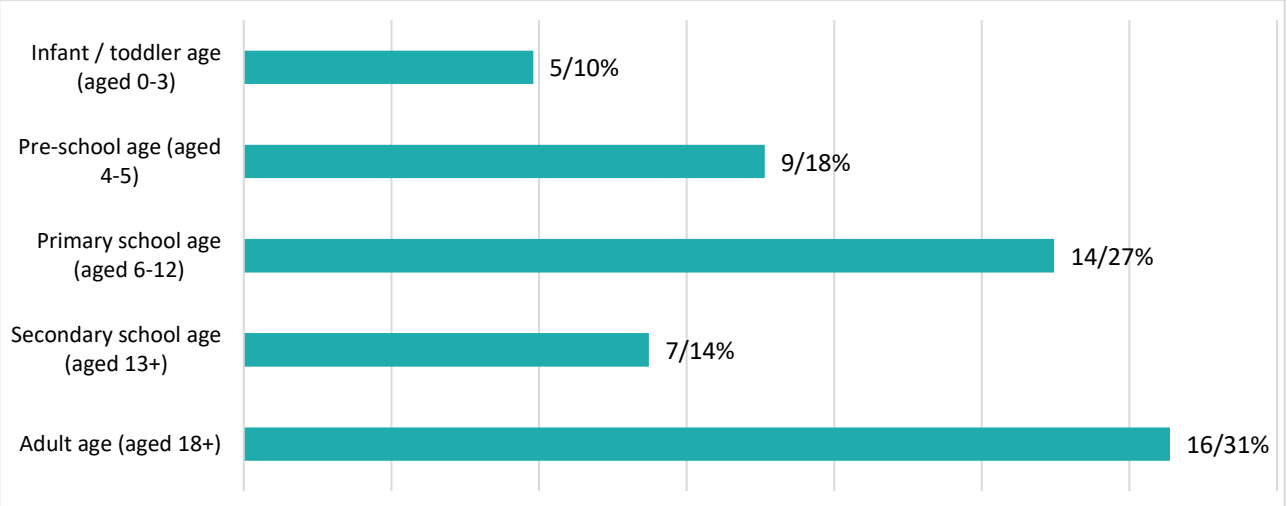


Figure 4: Number of child respondents by age (number of respondents=51)

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We asked people if they identified with any of the following statements. The statements included in order of number of responses:

- 'I identify as LGBTIQA+' (7 responses or 10%).
- 'I am a person with disability' (5 responses or 8%).
- 'I speak a language other than English at home' (3 responses or 5%).
- 'I'd prefer not to say' (3 responses or 5%).
- 'None of these apply to me' (46 responses or 72%).

PAST PARTICIPATION

To help us understand if we were engaging with new community members, we asked if participants had provided feedback on any other Council projects in the past 12 months.

In total, 28 respondents said they had provided feedback to Council in the past 12 months (45%). 29 respondents said they had not (47%) and 5 were unsure (8%).

What we heard

How do you feel about the draft concept plan?

Participants were asked how they felt about the concept plan for Clarke Reserve. Most respondents were supportive, saying either 'I really like it' or 'I like it' (22 or 54%). Ten respondents said 'I'm unsure / neutral' (10 or 24%). Nine respondents were not supportive, saying either 'I don't like it' or 'I really don't like it' (22%).

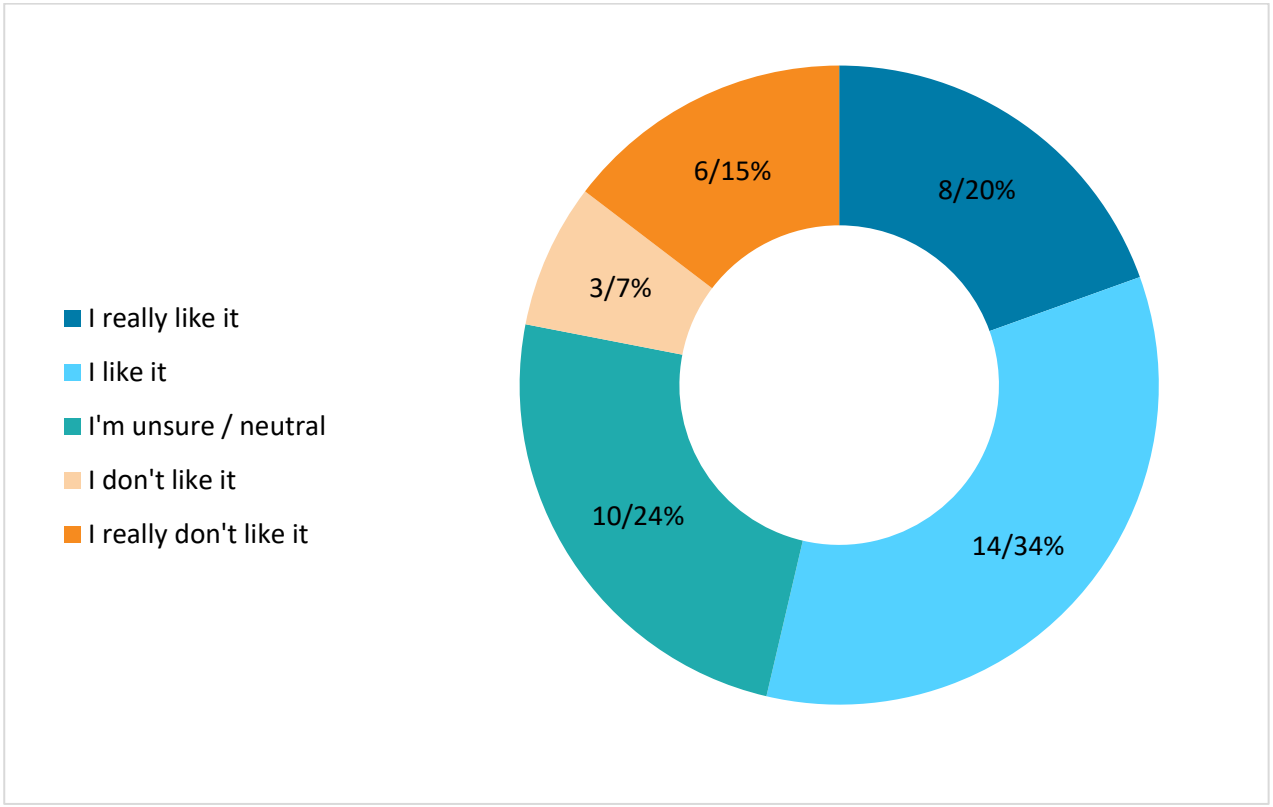


Figure 5: Number of responses to the question 'How do you feel about the draft concept plan?' (number of respondents=41)

What do you like about the draft concept plan?

We asked people what they like about the proposed concept plan. A total of 51 responses were received for this question. Responses to this question have been grouped into key themes below, from most to least common.

Theme	Number of comments	Example comment
Support for upgrades	**31**	*"It secures an area of the for people to enjoy some park space dog free."* *"Good that there are places for parents to sit. Good to have shade sails. it's a large place to walk through."* *"Support proposed playground overhaul and better separating off-leash dog areas to improve overall safety and community amenity by fencing the play area."*
Fencing and separation of dogs and other users	**19**	*"Separation so that children feel safe and that the pups won't be able to run onto the playground area."* *"The fence - very much needed separation from the dogs! This needs to be a dog free space. Kids and adults inside. Dogs outside."* *"Agree that a fence should be in place to protect kids from dogs."*
Safety and security	**11**	*"It will keep dogs safe, I often never went there because it's a really bad design being off leash and having no fence."* *"Safe, interactive area with timber work and tactile native garden and small interactive child pieces, like pumps, sandpit."* *"Like the net swing. separation between little swings and big swings helps it to feel safe."*
Variety of play opportunities	**9**	*"To increase the variety of uses of the soon to be in closed space."* *"I think the design does provide something for all age groups."*

		"Safe, interactive area with timber work and tactile native garden and small interactive child pieces, like pumps, sandpit."
Shade and shelter	**7**	*"The shaded areas, the new layout."* *"Shade sail is good."* *"Shaded areas and picnic tables."*
Landscaping and natural elements	**6**	*"I like the plan-will the materials used for the ground covering be nautral?"* *"Existing trees are maintained and protected"* *"It's great! Please include lot's of native vegetation and indigenous plantings/landscaping."*
Concerns or negative feedback	**5**	*"I don't like the concept plan. Leave the park natural and untouched."* *"I don't. If the children's play area has to be fenced - only the barked area should be considered. No barrier should be installed for dogs. PLEASE!"* *"I dont think it's necessary to have to many kids play structures when the primary school is just three blocks away and also there's a play structure on the beach 1/2 kilometre away."*
Seating and family amenities	**5**	*"The proposed pathway through the playground is a positive addition, providing easy access through the reserve for prams, scooters and bikes.* *"Improved seating."* *"it's a large place to walk through."*

Do you have any concerns with the draft concept plan? If you do, how would you solve them?

We asked people what they don't like about the proposed concept plan and how they would solve any concerns they had. A total of 61 responses were received. Responses to this question have been grouped into key themes below, from most to least common.

Theme	Number of comments	Example comment
Fencing and separation of dogs and other users	**34**	*"I would also like to see fencing for the dog park area too."* *"Why do you need a fence? When my child was growing up here the last 20+ years, there is no fence. The park is fine as it is."* *"The fenced in area seems very extensive leaving little room for dogs"*
Adult and broader community use	**10**	*"would like to see chin-up bar and space/path for kids to play their toy cars."* *"I really would have liked to see some toilets and change facilities for families, the closest toilets would be St Kilda botanical gardens or down near the beach"* *"Add adult exercise station with basic machines, for chest, shoulders, legs"*
Play equipment and opportunities	**8**	*"More interactive (Numbers/icons. Clocks, Children themed visuals) would be a good addition."* *"Longer monkey bars. redusing the swings from 4 to 3 is a worry."* *"Please keep the suspended swing. Would like to see trampoline."*

Materials and design character	**6**	*"Use tanbark instead of plastic turf. There is no benefit to children to play on plastic turf that breaks apart and causes environmental havoc and a health hazard."* *"My children like to play on the retaining wall. It looks like it's been removed and it's actually a fun thing. Could it be kept?"* *"What are the play structure walking surfaces made of? Would be nice to made sure they are anti slip especially in the wet."*
Seating, picnic and gathering spaces	**5**	*"More benches of people to sit on while throwing a stick to their dog or drinking a coffee and chilling."* *"I would like a couple more seating options in the 'pointy' area closest to Mitford Street."* *"More seating and tables needed to accomodate multiple families using the playground."*
Landscaping, vegetation and biodiversity	**5**	*"Fenced area to be smaller and align with the mulch area of the existing tree. would like to see landscaping around fence."* *"Fence with planting"* *"Maintaining some shared open space beside the playground would support the inclusive, community-focused nature of the park while still improving safety for children using the play equipment."*

Other comments included no concerns or negative feedback (4) and Impacts on residents (2).

Fencing

Since fencing was a big part of this project we identified the different views respondents gave on the proposed fencing, shown below from most to least common.

Theme	Number of comments	Example comment
Respondents who preferred fencing a smaller area	**18**	*"I would also like to see fencing for the dog park area too."* *"Consideration could be given to reducing the fenced area so that this grassed section remains open and accessible."* *"Reduce fencing area, on Mitford triangle."*
Respondents who supported fencing around play space	**17**	*"Support fencing as per the current design to maximise area where children can run and play"* *"I like that it is fenced in and that there is shade and places for families to sit close to the playground."* *"Agree that a fence should be in place to protect kids from dogs."*
Respondents who disagreed with adding a fence	**7**	*"No playground fence. it's a small place."* *"Installing a fence will not solve the issues that the irresponsible dog owners introduce."* *"No fencing"*
Respondents who explicitly supported the fence alignment shown in the concept plan	**2**	*"Support fencing as per the current design to maximise area where children can run and play."* *"The fence - very much needed separation from the dogs ! This needs to be a dog free space. Kids and adults inside. Dogs outside."*

Five responses included more than one of these views. The overlaps should be noted to help interpret all of these responses.

Three respondents said they preferred fencing a smaller area and clearly supported fencing around the play space. For the remaining 15 respondents who said they preferred fencing a smaller area, it was not clear whether they supported or disagreed with adding a fence. The remaining 14 respondents who supported a fence did not say they preferred fencing a smaller area.

The two respondents who explicitly supported the fence alignment shown in the concept plan were included in the 17 respondents who supported fencing around the play space. They did not say they preferred fencing a smaller area.

The seven respondents who said disagreed with adding a fence did not say they preferred fencing a smaller area.

Next steps

Council will develop a final concept plan with consideration for the feedback we received and also for technical, operational, budget and project requirements. The final concept plan will be available to view once it is completed.