

## WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve Master plan Engagement Summary Report

April 2023



### Introduction

Council is planning to upgrade the WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserves in Lalor with features that help our community get active, socialise and enjoy the outdoors. We are developing a master plan to create a vision and direction for the reserve's future. The master plan will include short and long term improvements to be delivered over the next 10 years.

The WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserves Master plan is a high-level document providing a broad vision for the entire reserve. The master plan does not focus on one specific item or user group, but instead looks at all the reserve's features, equipment, and users. The master plan aims to balance the needs of a range of user groups and the facilities required for the different activities undertaken in the reserve. It will outline any improvements required to achieve this balance in a staged action plan. The plan will also be developed in such a way that it meets the needs of both the current and future users.

The master plan explores issues such as:

- Out of date sports and park equipment (including the playground)
- Public access and connections to pathways
- Visibility and safety (including lighting).

The master plan will also consider ways to increase active and passive activities in the reserve. These may include:

- Circuit walking paths
- Picnic shelters and seating
- Informal multi-sport courts (i.e.: half-court basketball, table tennis, volleyball, or bocce)
- Fitness stations

## How we engaged you

The WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserves Master plan consultation was open for community comment from 5 to 21 July 2022. In this phase we undertook broad community engagement to understand how the community and sporting groups use the space, what could be done to improve current experiences and how they would like to use the space in the future.

Digital engagement through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform was launched in early July with a community survey and pinpoint map. Subscribers to the Engage Whittlesea platform that had previously expressed interest in the parks or Lalor area were notified via email of the new project page.

This was followed by a letter box drop to residents who live within a 700-metre radius of the reserve to inform them of the development of the master plan and encourage feedback through the community consultation.

We commenced face to face consultation in early July, meeting with local schools, kindergartens and sporting clubs who regularly use the reserve.

A morning and afternoon pop-up was held at the reserve in July where community members were invited to participate in a survey via hardcopy or online using the QR code or iPad available.

Visitors to the reserve were informed about the consultation through large corflute signage installed at the main entry point.

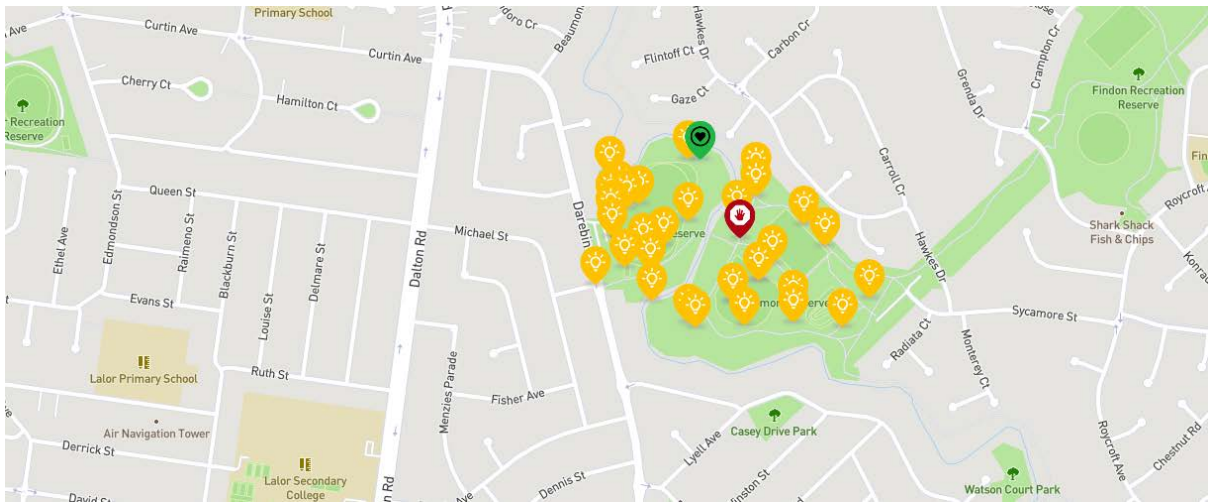
The community consultation and community pop-up dates were shared on Council's social channels including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The six posts (four on Facebook) were viewed by a combined total of 21,564, with 711 of these people interacting with it in some way (sharing, commenting, or leaving a reaction).

## Participation

The WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserves Master plan project page on Council's Engage Whittlesea platform attracted 382 visitors during the consultation period. In that time 15 community members opted to follow the project page to remain abreast of developments. A snapshot of participation in the consultation is as below:

- 52 community members contributed to the engagement by completing the survey.
- 51% of those that participated in the engagement were female.
- Community members aged 26 – 45 years made up 70% of respondents
- 40% live in Lalor, 23% in Mill Park
- 68% live within walking distance of the reserve.

A total of 37 people shared their thoughts and feedback on the interactive social map (image of map below). Majority of the contributors were from Mill Park (54%) or Lalor (43%).



## What we heard

A total of 96% of respondents have visited WA Smith or Sycamore Reserve previously. Of these, 68% live in walking distance to the reserve.

Only two contributors indicated that they haven't been to the reserves. For one, the reserve didn't meet their needs and the other didn't provide a reason.

Of the 52 respondents that had visited WA Smith and Sycamore Reserve just over half (56%) frequented the reserve daily or 2-3 times per week. The remainder visit the reserve weekly (16%), monthly (10%) and a few times a year (18%).

The oval is the facility used most by respondents, with 76% indicating that they use the oval when visiting WA Smith or Sycamore Reserve. The playground is also well utilised with 52% bringing their children to the playground, followed by the 54% of contributors using the carpark.

Many respondents indicated their connection to the reserve is that they are a local resident (76%), with 60% living within walking distance and 34% within driving distance of the reserve.

The main reason for visiting the reserve for 76% of respondents is to exercise (running, yoga, walking) while others use the reserve to partake in riding (bike, scooter, skate), walking their dogs (36%) playing sport with a local club (30%) and kick to kick or other ball games on the oval (36%).

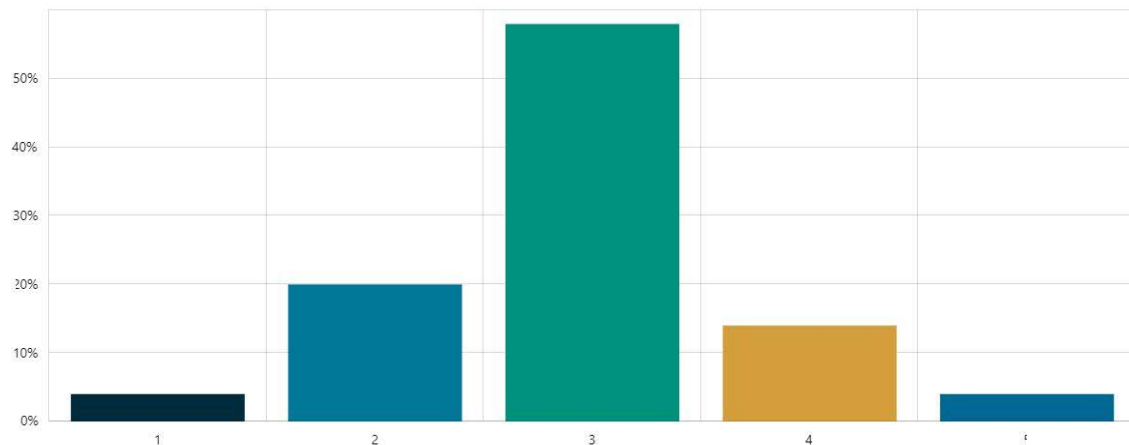
Facilities is the key issue and priority for reserve users, 82% feel that the playground, toilets, picnic areas and other facilities need to be upgraded or replaced.

Just under half of respondents (43%) feel that there are not enough facilities for the number of visitors. The park is small with limited equipment which is only suitable for younger children.

Safety is an issue for 42% of users who say they don't feel safe at the reserve, particularly at night. Some safety concerns that we heard from contributors is dirt bike riders using the reserve, homeless people sleeping near the creek, basketball balls falling into the creek and lack of lighting was a standout response with 26 comments.

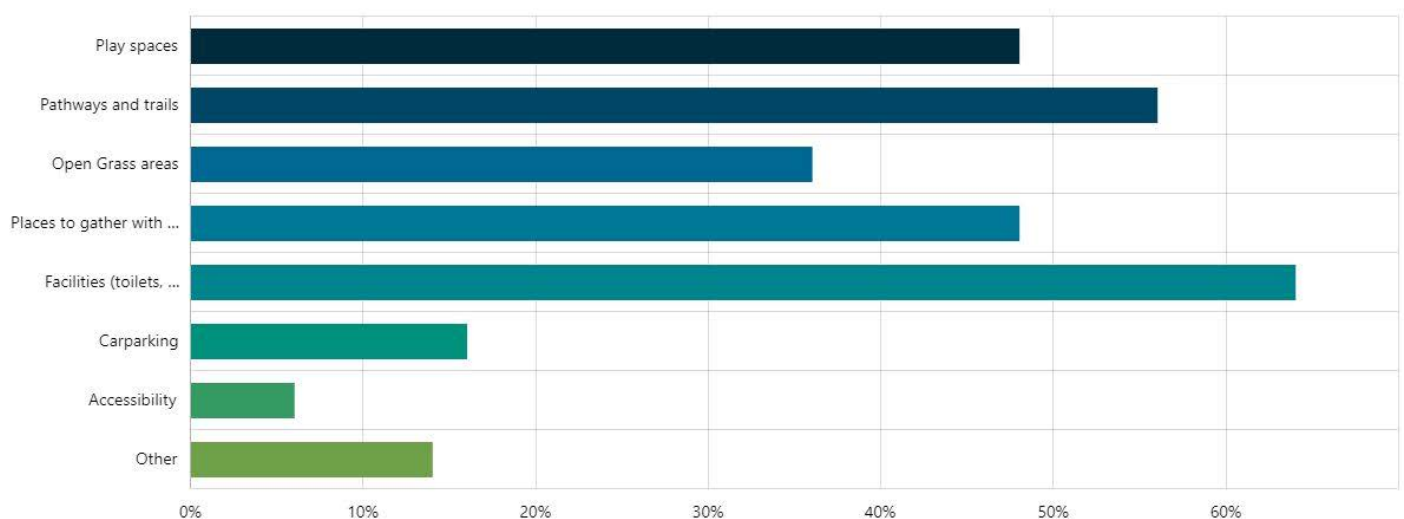
Many respondents use the reserve to walk their dogs. We received 17 dog related comments about the dog faeces left on the oval and the need for extra bins and a dog litter bag dispenser.

This feedback was reflected when presented with a scale of one to five stars, with one being very poor and five being very good. The overall average rating is 2.9 for the reserve. See graph below for actual figures.



A Pathway and trails for walking, running, or cycling is an important feature to over half of residents (56%), as well as good play spaces (48%) and areas to gather with family and friends (48%)

The most important feature for 64% of respondents is the facilities available to use, toilets, picnic areas, change rooms and additional seating. Refer to graph below for the breakdown of responses.



## Opportunities

Respondents shared many potential opportunities for WA Smith and Sycamore Reserve, some which may be out of scope of this project. These have been grouped below.



### **Recreation for all users and abilities**

**Playground** –replacing the existing playground with an updated play space was a common theme through the consultation. Respondents suggested that more equipment is needed to accommodate different ages and abilities, as well as the number of visitors to the reserve.

*“Please make a safe basketball court and table tennis and gym equipment for the elderly to enjoy for years to come”*

*“Would love to see age-appropriate play equipment for young and older kids and nature play areas that engage kids to engage with the natural bushland”*



**Walking Running and cycling** – community members suggested upgrading paths and adding additional walking and cycling paths around the reserve.

*“The loop around Sycamore Reserve is about 1km, it would a cool addition to add 100m markers around this to encourage a 1km time trial and encourage physical activity”*

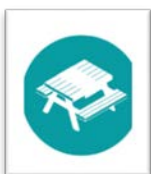
**Fitness Facilities** – introducing fitness facilities all ages.



**Sports** – multiple community members highlighted improvements needed to the existing sporting facilities and offered suggestions of suitable additions to be considered such as a half basketball court, an area to ride bikes/scooters/rollerblade and footy goal posts.

*“The cricket nets are unsafe and a hazard to all that use them. They need to be enclosed and nets extended all the way back”*

*“My son plays cricket at this oval, and it would be important to upgrade the reserve and club rooms”*



*“The reserve would be great with more sporting options added, a pump track would be great to add on to the existing BMX track. Even a skate park would bring kids in to try sports”*

**Facilities** – Most respondents felt that WA Smith or Sycamore Reserve required upgrading or introducing new facilities, including toilets, seating, picnic tables, BBQ area, drinking tap and bins. Some respondents use the reserve to walk their dog and would like to see a dog park at the reserve with a dog bin and bags.



*“Could also do with some more play equipment as well as picnic tables and shelter for when it rains and most of all cameras and lights to make it safe when walking in the early mornings or late nights”*

*“Clean safe public toilets, walking/cycling trails on both sides of the creek with more bridges/crossings, regular hard rubbish removal, and night lighting would all contribute to more enjoyment of these areas”*

*“ More trees and picnic areas are needed. An off-lead dog park, and an upgrade to toilet facilities, which should be open during daylight hours”*

*“Facilities are quite old when compared to other grounds in the council and should be modernized. Both WA Smith Reserve and Sycamore Reserve need to be redesigned to be four separate grounds. Two at WA Smith and two at Sycamore. Improve the cricket ground at sycamore”*

*“Facilities desperately need upgrades”*

*“Would love a secured dog park”*



**Safety** – introducing additional lighting, new fencing and removal of trees to improve accessibility and viewing of playground equipment.

*“Poor lighting and walking track area is secluded not easily seen by others”*

*“During the early morning it is very dark in the park and hard to see. More lighting would make it feel safer when needing to walk my dog.”*

## Next Steps

Thank you to everyone that completed the survey, dropped a pin and participated in the community engagement for WA Smith and Sycamore reserve.

Feedback gathered from the community is being used to develop the design and will be incorporated in the decision-making process. While we are not able to accommodate everyone's comments, the project team will provide solutions to the issues raised and balance them with the requirements of Council.

A draft master plan design will be presented in the second phase of community consultation, providing an opportunity for the community to see how the feedback provided has helped shape the master plan. The draft master plan and concept design will be endorsed by Council prior to community consultation which is expected in late 2023.