

Gasworks Art Park Open Space Upgrade



Engagement Summary Report – July 2022



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Executive summary

The City of Port Phillip is upgrading Gasworks Arts Park to improve the open space experience for all users of the park. Council is also partnering with the State Government to manage the contamination at the Park in conjunction with the upgrade works.

The park is in need of upgrade to improve the following:

- Vegetation management
- Path network and accessibility
- Drainage
- Opportunities to introduce play to the park
- Extend opportunities for art in the park
- Lighting upgrades



Background

Gasworks Arts Park is a walled park bordered by Pickles, Graham, Richardson and Foote Streets in Albert Park. Access gates are located along each street. The gasworks site operated as a gasworks foundry from 1871 until its closure in 1971. South Melbourne City Council purchased a portion of the site in 1979 while the rest of the land remained crown land. In 1982 South Melbourne City Council were appointed Committee of Management over the crown land portion of the park, and in 1984 preparations were commenced to transform the site into a park.

As a result of the historical gas works, the site is contaminated with the by-products of coal gas production. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has deemed the site safe for ongoing use as a public park, and it will remain open to the community whilst further investigations and any works required to manage the contamination occur.

Remediation of the park commenced in 1986, Gasworks Inc was formed and received funding to develop an arts precinct in the park. The renovated buildings now provide theatre productions, artist studios, art galleries and a café.

In an effort to manage the ongoing soil contamination issue, a draft park plan was produced in 2014 by Golder. Part of the recommendations included removal of all the trees to create a greenfield site. Feedback from the local community was not in favour of this plan and the Friends of Gasworks Art Park was formed.

Since 2015, the state government has undertaken extensive testing and analysis to create a comprehensive understanding of the surface soil and the risk to human health. Although widespread contamination has been confirmed within the soil profile, the preliminary findings of the draft Contamination Management Action Plan (CMAP) will likely conclude that there is a low risk to human health.

In 2019, Council engaged Paul Wardell from 3Acres design to create a draft landscape concept plan taking in to consideration CMAP guidelines to date.

In late 2021/22 Council's Open Space team developed a Concept Plan for Stakeholder Consultation.

This document has been compiled following the conclusion of the first phase of community engagement for the Gasworks Park Upgrade (21 March - 28 April 2022). Over the engagement period, 21 responses were received through the City's online engagement platform - Have Your Say Port Phillip. Respondents provided recommendations and comments on what they like about the existing reserve and play space and what they would like to see in the future.

Following this round of engagement, sub-consultants will be engaged to develop the designs further and take into consideration the feedback received.



Engagement approach

The community was informed about the engagement process in the following way:

- Signage displayed in the reserve;
- Council's 'Have Your Say' webpage, using the 'Gather' tool;
- Council's social media pages (Facebook and Instagram);
- Council's 'Diversity' newsletter and HYS newsletter;
- 2 x community Q&A sessions (9 & 16 April)
- Consultation session with Friends of Gasworks Park (29 April)
- Consultation session with Gasworks Park CEO and Farmers Market representative (5 May)
- Consultation session with Albert Park College and Student Representatives (26 May & 7 June)

Engagement findings – Community Sessions

During the community sessions attendees were invited to provide feedback on the Concept Plan and asked what they like about Gasworks Park.

Responses were noted down from **58** participants. These responses have been categorised into the following themes; Playground, Access, Environmental management, College Access, and Other.

These themes have been explored in the table below.

Theme	Recommendations	% of N	Recommendations
Playground	6	10%	<p>The majority of respondents in this category supported the inclusion of a playground (4). Two respondents did not support the inclusion of a playground.</p> <p>"More play areas for all ages".</p> <p>"Love the Concept of the playground. Great use of currently dead space".</p> <p>"Playground needs to be natural".</p>

Access	5	8%	<p>(2) respondents commented on coloured concrete paths. (1) respondent expressed a preference for crushed rock paths. (2) respondents in this category discussed parking. (1) expressing a need for parking for the new theatre and (1) wanting parking to remain at current numbers.</p> <p><i>"crushed rock rather than concrete paths"</i></p> <p><i>"Keep the parking the same"</i></p>
Environmental Management	28	47%	<p>The large majority of attendees (27) addressed environmental management issues such as increasing/maintaining canopy (9), protecting habitat (5) providing a water source/bird feeder (5), providing drainage (2).</p> <p><i>"Why are possums not mentioned in the plan? There are also two Tawny Frogmouths in one of the trees"</i></p> <p><i>"Include more bird boxes and encourage more than just bowerbirds."</i></p> <p>Other responses mentioned including dog waste collection (2), and the need for more bins at the park (1)</p> <p><i>"Dog park hygiene - encourage pickups"</i></p> <p><i>"When it rains the market becomes too wet, so drainage needs to be looked at."</i></p>
College Access	5	8%	<p>(3) respondents had concerns about students accessing Gasworks Park and associated rubbish issues (1) and causing erosion to grass areas (1).</p> <p><i>"Garbage is increasing because of school kids."</i></p> <p><i>"There will be a goat track because of the regular use of schoolchildren".</i></p> <p>(2) community members were supportive of students accessing the park for their access needs.</p>



			<i>"kids should be allowed in the park. School kids are part of the community."</i>
Other	14	24%	<p>A range of other issues were covered including suggestions for new sculpture ideas (5) improving park lighting (3) and including dog park fencing (2).</p> <p><i>"At night time it is very dark. Needs better lighting".</i></p> <p><i>"Invite local artists for sculpture as they know the local area"</i></p> <p><i>"Fencing near Richardson St to stop dogs running onto road"</i></p>

Have Your Say Response

Information relating to the engagement was posted on Council's Have Your Say site. The page received **363** views, with **21** users contributing to the post. A total of **7** users chose to follow the page. With contributors leaving a total of **30** comments. The comments contributed by some participants covered a range of topics.

These responses have been categorised into the following themes; Playground, Access, Environmental management and Other.

These themes have been explored in the table below.

Theme	Recommendations	% of N	Recommendations
Playground	7	17%	<p>83% of respondents did not support the idea of a new playground (5).</p> <p><i>"There are many playgrounds nearby and children can enjoy the swings, climbing and running around the bush paths"</i></p> <p><i>"No formal play equipment. All nature play".</i></p>
Access	12	29%	<p>(3) respondents commented on improving the Richardson Street entry point. (6) respondents expressed concerns in increasing hard pavements.</p>

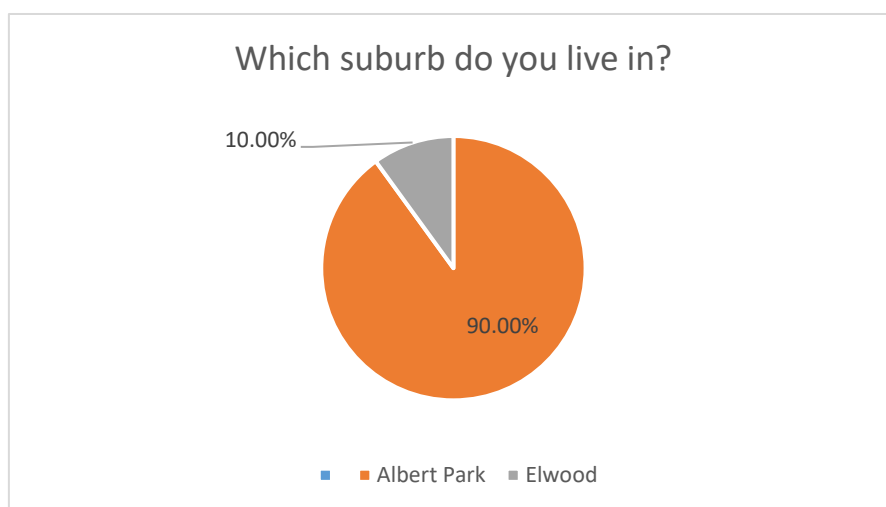


			<p><i>"I think the Richardson Street access need to improve. It's a weird signal having an industrial - strength gate closing off the main entrance."</i></p> <p><i>" No new concrete paths. Paths should not be wide but small and meandering."</i></p> <p><i>" Formalising pathways sounds like hard surfaces to allow vehicular traffic. The great thing about the park currently is there are very few hard, concreted surfaces".</i></p>
Environmental Management	12	29%	<p>The respondents (11) addressed environmental management issues such as increasing/maintaining canopy (7) and providing a water source/bird feeder.</p> <p><i>" No trees to be cut down. This park is unique with its bushland setting. "</i></p> <p><i>"Emphasis must be on trees, habitat for native birds, respite from built environments."</i></p> <p>Other responses mentioned including dog waste collection (1).</p> <p><i>"Maintaining hygiene with regards to dog waste management (which is an issue all over the suburb, but especially in off leash areas)".</i></p>
Other	12	29%	<p>A range of other issues were covered including comments relating to planning process and Council decision making (7), the inclusion of dog park fencing/barriers (5) improving park lighting (1).</p> <p><i>"Why are the works not starting until 2023. This has now been going on for at least 12 years and there is no detailed plan."</i></p>

			<p><i>"I would like the 'upgrade' of the park to be done in stages so that it is always available to the residents."</i></p> <p><i>"Ensuring that play spaces, particularly for children or vulnerable and less mobile communities, are protected from off leash dogs."</i></p>
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Who we heard from

100% of participants said they live in Port Phillip. Of these, the majority of respondents are from Albert Park with the remaining participants living in Elwood.



The highest proportion of participants are aged 60-69. Followed by 36% of respondents aged in the 35-49 age group.

Participants were represented by the following age groups

