



Sol Green Reserve, South Melbourne - Community Engagement Summary Report

July 2023



Executive Summary

The play space and park at Sol Green Reserve in South Melbourne is required to be upgraded as the play equipment is nearing the end of its functional life. There is also an opportunity to review and upgrade other aspects of the park.

From 05 May to 04 June 2023, the City of Port Phillip asked for community feedback on what is working well and what can be improved at Sol Green Reserve so that we can make sure the park is a great space for our community.

Throughout the engagement, participants were asked what play equipment is needed at Sol Green Reserve as well as being invited to review other aspects of the park including pathways, seating, lighting and netball/basketball facilities.

Council have already identified upgrades that are required to the reserve and park, including:

- New playground (with accessible equipment)
- Upgraded netball and basketball area
- Improved access and footpath connections throughout the park
- Additional greening and tree planting
- Updated lighting
- and other upgrades of assets where required

There was a total of 295 visitors to the Have Your Say page with 65 contributions to the survey by 59 contributors. There were 2 pop-up sessions undertaken (Saturday 27 May 2023 and Wednesday 31 May 2023) where community members were asked to provide feedback in person, however not all demographics were captured at these. Therefore, each graph noted below captures the responses from all those that provided their response to that specific question.

Additionally, various open-ended questions from the online survey do not have responses due to an error in the system, where the skip-logic function was not working correctly, resulting in fewer responses from the community.

There were additionally 30 contributions to the HYS page map by 8 contributors and further, Council received an email submission from 'Friends of Sol Green' and a hire group of the Sol Green Community Centre. A high-level summary of the results are presented below:

- The highest represented age group of participants was 35 – 49 years at 46%
- 54% of respondents identified as a woman or female, followed by 42% who identified as a man or male
- The majority of participants (77%) lived in South Melbourne
- 86% of participants visit Sol Green regularly (at least once a month) and the activity they most participated in was 'visit the playground'
- Key themes regarding improvement of the reserve centred around improving the playground, improving the basketball court and increasing lighting.

There was an overall positive response from participants in support for the project. The majority of issues raised by respondents were issues Council had already identified with a small number of issues raised that Council had not yet considered.

Information received from the community during this consultation period will be considered to assist with progressing the design.

Introduction

Project background

The City of Port Phillip is upgrading the play space and reserve at Sol Green Reserve in South Melbourne. The existing play equipment is well loved and is nearing the end of its functional life. This has presented an opportunity to learn from our community about what play equipment is needed at Sol Green Reserve as well as review some other aspects of the park, such as pathways, seating, lighting and netball/basketball facilities. This upgrade intends to improve the character and quality of facilities to strengthen its role as a local community space.

The upgrades proposed will include:

- New playground (with accessible equipment)
- Upgraded netball/ basketball court
- Improved access and footpath connections throughout the park
- Additional greening, tree planting and improvements to vegetation
- Updated lighting
- New seating/ amenity upgrades where required

These upgrades will align with **Council Plan 2021-31 - Liveable Port Phillip** and **The Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022 – 2032.**

Community consultation seeking feedback on the concept design was held from 5th May 2023 through to 4th June 2023. Information received from the community during this consultation period is presented below and will be considered to assist with progressing the design.

Every effort has been made by the authors of this document to accurately represent participant feedback and insights.

What we set out to achieve

The purpose of the community engagement was to:

- Understand if the proposed park upgrades identified by Council were accurate and correct
- Understand if there were further ideas from the community Council had missed

Engagement questions

Participants were asked a number of questions through the online survey. Some of the questions below had a skip logic applied so participants saw questions based on how they answered the current question.

- How often do you visit Sol Green Reserve?
- What do you do when you visit the park?
- What currently works well in the park?
- How can we make the park better?
- What do you like about the current playground?
- How could the playground be improved?
- How old is the child/children that visits the playground with you?
- How could the netball and basketball area be improved?
- Do you visit the park after daylight hours?
- What do you do when you visit the park after sunset?
- Do you feel the lighting is sufficient to feel safe after sunset?

Participants were also asked to respond to a range of demographic questions, including:

- Age bracket
- Gender
- Residential suburb; and
- Identity

What we did

Engagement activities

The following engagement activities were undertaken during this project:

- An online survey hosted on Council's Have your Say project page
- On site posters and letter drops to nearby residents.
- 2 x 2hour pop up sessions on site
- Emails sent to primary schools/ playgroups in the area; South Melbourne Primary (added to their inewsletter), Busybees Port Melbourne, South Melbourne Only About Children, Galilee Primary
- Emails sent to the Community Centre venue hire groups and poster placed in Community building

Participation

Participation snapshot:

- 295 visitors of the Have Your Say page
- 65 contributions to the survey by 59 contributors
- 30 contributions to the HYS page map by 8 contributors
- 13 people followed the project page
- 2 submissions received via email

Strategies to support participation

Community participation was supported through the following initiatives:

- **Dedicated Project Page:** a dedicated project page was created on Council's Have Your Say (HYS), a central online location for community to access information and participate in the survey.
- **HYS posters:** in key areas around the site.
- **Letterbox drop:** to residents in close proximity to the site.
- **Emails:** to primary schools/ playgroups in the area and Community Centre venue hire groups.

Who we heard from

Age of participants

The highest represented age group of participants was 35 – 49 years, 39 participants or 46% of total participants. The second highest represented age group were under 15 years, with 12 participants or 14% of total participants.

A breakdown of participants' age groups can be seen in the chart below.

**The below graph captures data from both the survey and pop-ups.*

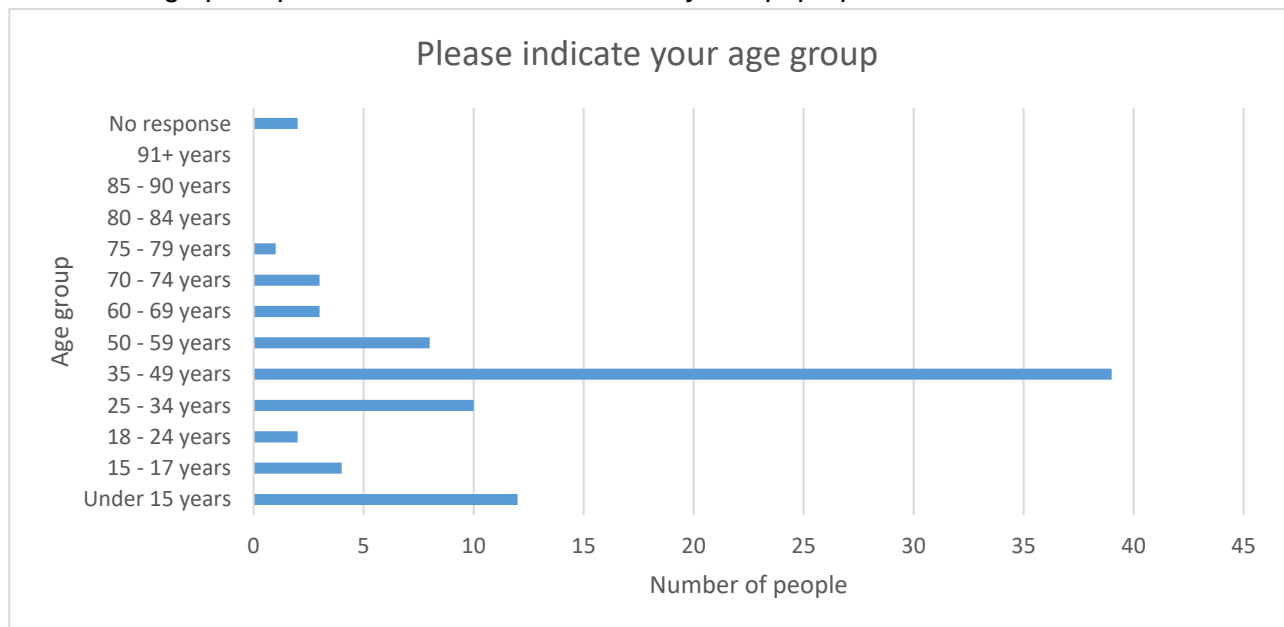


Figure 1: Participant age groups

Gender of participants

84 participants identified their gender. 54% (45 participants) identified as a woman or female and 42% (35 participants) identified as a man or male. 1% (1 participant) identified as non-binary and 4% (3 participants) preferred not to say.

A breakdown of participants' gender can be seen in the chart below.

**The below graph captures data from both the survey and pop-ups.*

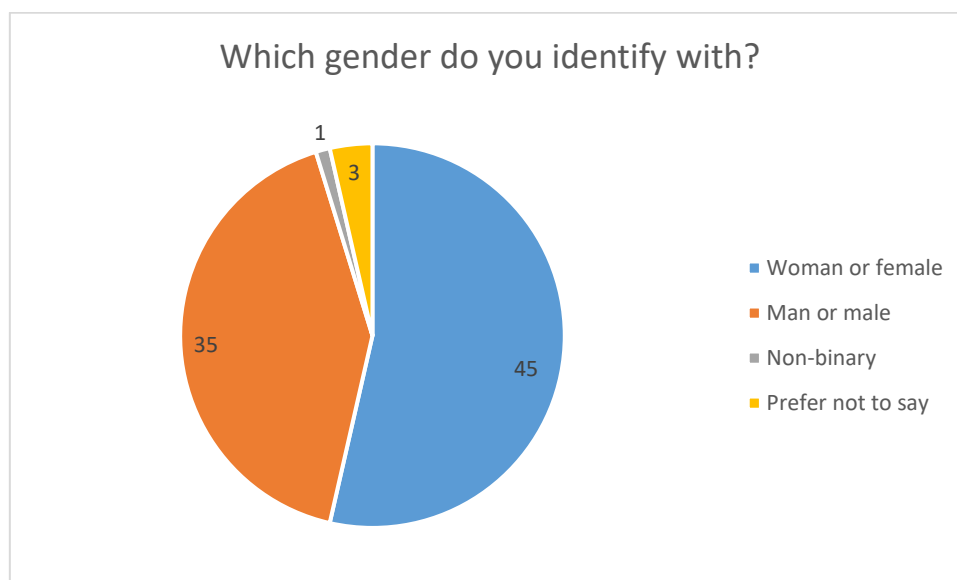


Figure 2: Participant gender

Participants by suburb

Participants were asked which suburb they lived in, with the majority of participants (77% or 50 participants) identifying that they lived in South Melbourne. Four (4) other suburbs within the City of Port Phillip were represented, with these numbers shown in the chart below.

**The below graph captures data from both the survey and pop-ups.*

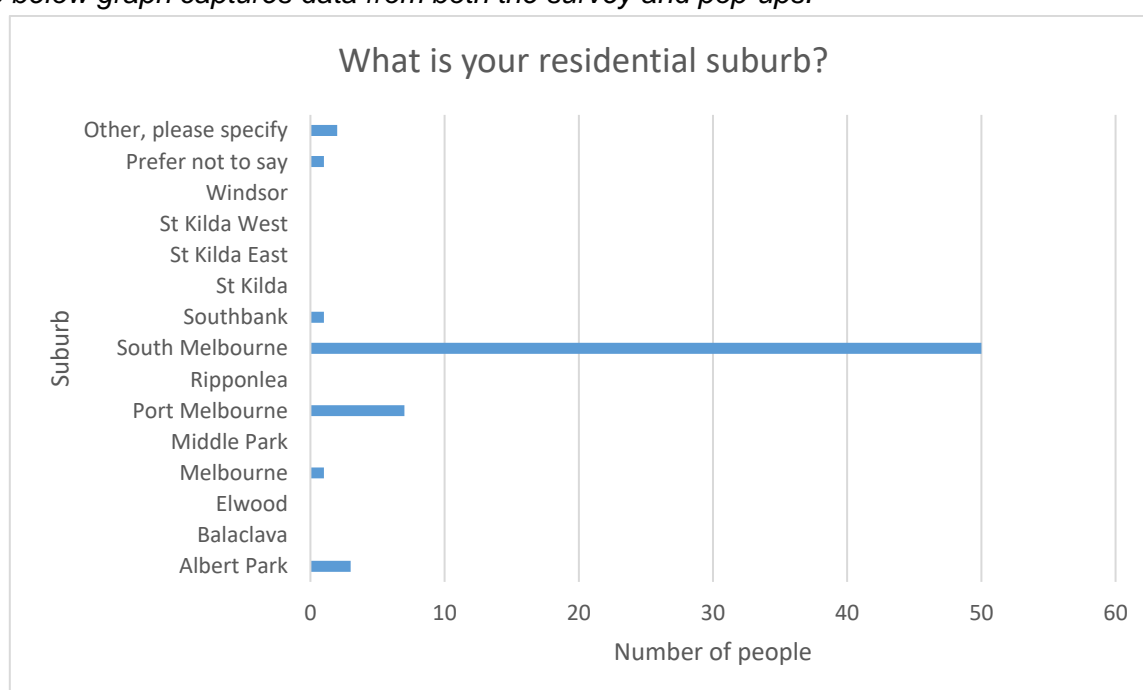


Figure 3: Participants' suburbs

What we heard

What do you do when you visit Sol Green Reserve?

Participants were asked to describe their activity at Sol Green Reserve. The highest reported activity via the online survey was 'Visit Playground' (42 responses), followed by 'Use the Basketball Area' (34 responses) and 'Walk through park on way to somewhere else' (32 responses). The highest reported activity noted via both Pop-Ups (25/05/23 and 27/05/23) was 'Walk my Dog' (6 responses).

A breakdown of participants' responses can be seen in the graph below.

**The below graph captures data from both the survey and pop-ups.*

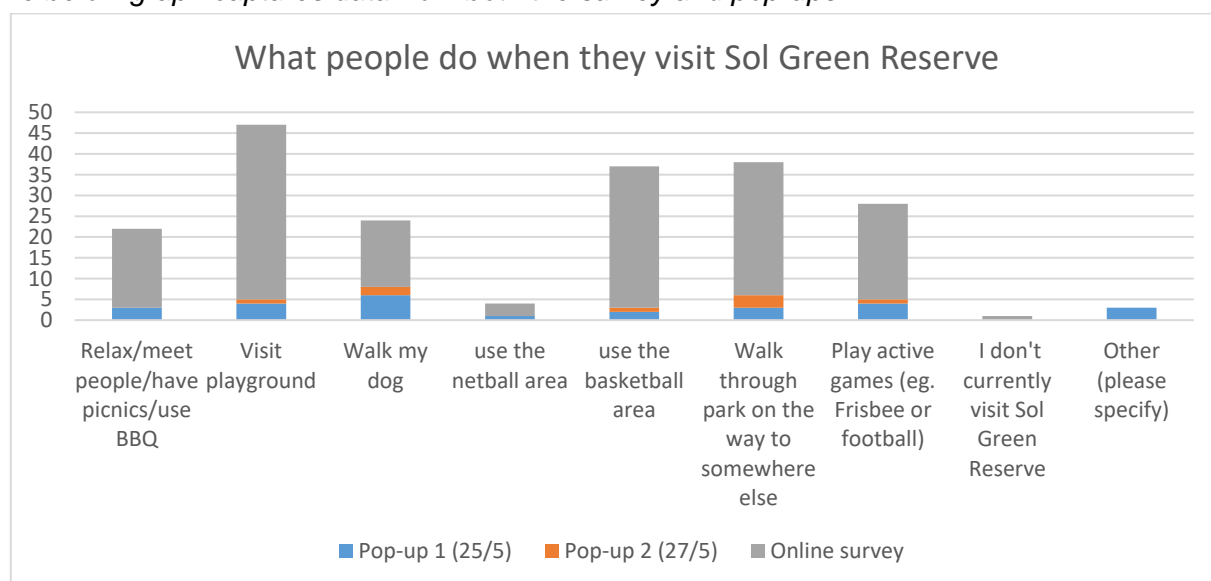


Figure 4: Participants' activity at Sol Green Reserve

How often do you visit Sol Green Reserve?

Participants were asked how often they visit Sol Green Reserve. The highest response from the online survey and both the pop-up sessions (25/05/23 & 27/05/23) being 'Regularly – I visit at least once a month' at 86%. A breakdown of the participants' responses can be seen in the graph below.

**The below graph captures data from both the survey and pop-ups.*

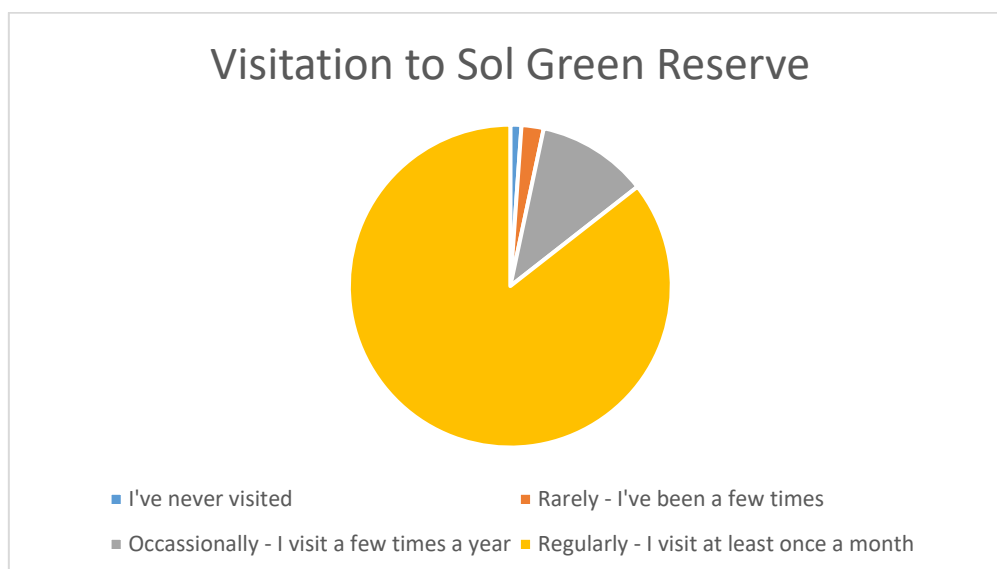


Figure 5: Participants' visitation to Sol Green Reserve

Participants were asked:

- How can we make the park better?
- What currently works well in the park?
- What do you do when you visit the park after sunset?

The key themes that arose from these questions are tabulated below including extracts from comments received.

**The below graph captures all the Have Your Say survey data.*

Table 1: Consultation themes

Theme	Number of Responses	Feedback
How can we make the park better?		
This question was responded to by 118 people and has been themed under 4 broad categories. The four are themed below:		
Improve Kids Playground	51	<i>"Playground should have more equipment such as ground trampoline, water play area, net swing."</i> <i>"Definitely could benefit from a fenced playground."</i>
Improve Basketball Court	26	<i>"Make a full-size basketball court with the same reversible basketball and netball ring."</i> <i>"Make a new full sized basketball court."</i>
More path and court lighting	27	<i>"The lights need to be upgraded to come on when it gets dark and to light up the footpaths."</i>

Theme	Number of Responses	Feedback
		<i>"The area is NOT well lit at night, and there are some dangerous people within the vicinity of the area, and I don't feel safe walking around there at night."</i>
More/improve seating	7	<i>"The seating seems pretty old and quite exposed to the elements."</i> <i>"More seating, and higher seating."</i>
Other comments included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult fitness equipment • Water fountain • Reclaim road space as parkland and enlarge the park • Integrate water sensitive urban design • Off lead dog park 		
Further suggestions to improve the park that fall outside the scope of this project include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storm damage in Coventry Street • Power line undergrounding • Services renewal • Acquire land • Plant new trees in Nelson Road • Introduce traffic calming measures • Manage on-street parking more efficiently, line markings and adjust regulations • Remove non-park uses from the park; community centre • Installation of public toilets in the park <p>These suggestions have been referred to the relevant teams within Council where appropriate.</p>		
What currently works well in the park? <p>This question was responded to by 80 people and has been themed under 3 broad categories. The three are themed below:</p>		
Basketball court is well used	33	<i>"The Basketball court is the most used aspect of the park and is always being used."</i> <i>"Basketball court - always being used."</i>
Play equipment	31	<i>"Kids enjoy the play equipment."</i> <i>"Playground draws people in."</i>
Grassed area/Green space/Trees	28	<i>"Large grassy area next to playground."</i> <i>"The grassed areas are nice."</i> <i>"Succession planting plan is needed."</i> <i>"Enhance and maintain open lawn areas that support a variety of recreational uses."</i>
Other comments included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The picnic tables • BBQ 		

Theme	Number of Responses	Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways 		
What do you do when you visit the park after sunset?		
This question was responded to by 30 people and has been themed under 4 broad categories. The four are themed below:		
Walk through the park	13	<i>"Walk through as I walk from the bus stop and tram stops and my house."</i> <i>"Walk through with care and trepidation."</i>
Play basketball	11	<i>"Play and use the basketball hoop."</i> <i>"Playing basketball or going for a run around it."</i>
Walk the dog	5	<i>"Walk my dog."</i> <i>"Walk the dogs in the park."</i>

Participants were invited to answer various open-ended questions about their experiences within the playground, however there was an error within the system and the Skip-Logic function within the survey was not working correctly. As a result, only a minimal number of participants were able to have the opportunity to view and therefore answer the open-ended questions contained within the survey.

Key themes were unable to be clearly identified however responses have been summarised in the table below.

Table 2: Open-ended question responses

Other Responses	Number of Responses	Feedback
What do you like about the current playground?		
This question was responded to by 10 people and included the following comments:		
Equipment range and mix	5	<i>"Good mix of equipment for a range of ages".</i> <i>"It would be nice if it was a bit more modern and aesthetically pleasing of course!".</i> <i>"Good selection of equipment available. Mixed ages too, which is nice. Things are not too spread out".</i> <i>"It's great, absolutely love the hill and all the play equipment".</i> <i>"My 5 year old daughter likes the bridge and hill but it's not a personal favourite of mine. The older daughter likes the flying Fox and swings".</i>
Other comments related to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ambience and "feeling" of the playground The location 		
How could the playground be improved?		

Other Responses	Number of Responses	Feedback
This question was responded to by 10 people, and included the following suggestions:		
Play equipment	7	<i>"More variety of play equipment".</i> <i>"Improved look and more options for play".</i> <i>"More inclusive equipment, general update would help".</i> <i>"More variety for smaller children".</i>
Other comments related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public amenities • The location • The inclusion of a fence 		
How old is the child/children that visits the playground with you?		
Parents that responded to the survey were asked to answer a question relating to the ages of their child / children with responses shown below.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-2yrs: 4 • 3-6yrs: 9 • 7-12yrs: 2 • 13+yrs: 1 		
How could the netball and basketball area be improved?		
This question was responded to by 3 people and included the following suggestions:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace the netball court with a full-sized basketball court • Surround the area with a fence • Undertake regular maintenance checks which includes regular fixing of the nets. 		
Participants were asked: Do you visit the park after daylight hours (65 respondents)?		
The table below represents the responses:		
No	35	
Yes	30	
Participants were asked: Do you feel the lighting is sufficient to feel safe after sunset (30 respondents)?		
The table below represents the responses:		
No	22	<i>"I feel as though I could be kidnapped and no one can see".</i> <i>"Pitch black and can't see anything".</i> <i>"The paths and the basketball court need more light".</i> <i>"There was no lightning tonight when walking dogs".</i> <i>"The lighting is white in the lamp-posts but they aren't high enough to feel bright. Not welcoming with insufficient lighting in surrounding streets, it feels unsafe around the community housing"</i>
Yes	7	

Other Responses	Number of Responses	Feedback
Unsure	1	Other safety improvements that arose in relation to feeling safe included: "Improve sightlines into and across the park".

On the HYS page, we included an interactive mapping question that allowed participants to mark up the map with their thoughts for what's working well and what can be improved at Sol Green Reserve (See figure 7).

The responses captured are as follows: expand park size (6) improve basketball court (3), grass area and vegetation (3) rubbish and recycling bins (2) and parking/traffic (2). There was 25 comments from 7 respondents.



Figure 7: Participants' suggestions for Sol Green Reserve

A small number of children participated in the drawing activity at the pop up session held on Saturday 27 May 2023, and were asked to draw how they think the playground could be made better. 3 females (all aged 6) and 2 males (ages 8 and 9) participated in this activity with the following suggestions noted:

- Monkey Bars
- Flying Fox
- New lights
- Swings / tyre swing
- Make believe shop and house
- Climbing frame / ladder
- Slide

- Beginners skate ramp
- Giant trampoline
- Build a tunnel in the hill with a window and telescope

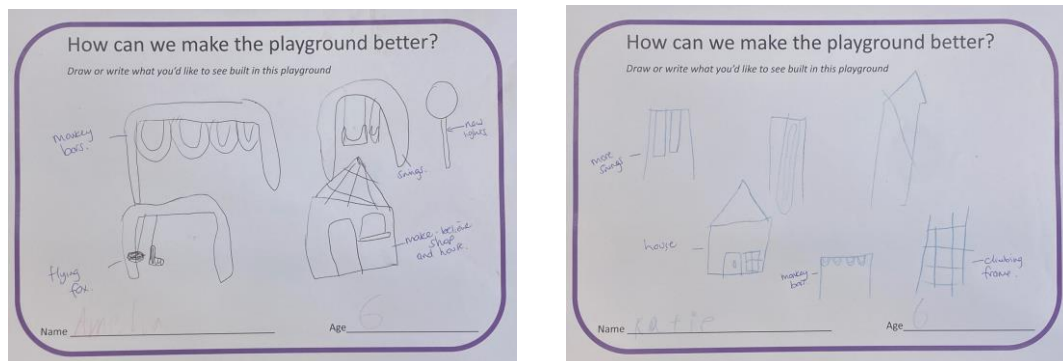


Figure 8: Children's drawings from the Sol Green Reserve Pop-up

Summary

The key messaging we heard from the community engagement process undertaken for the upgrade at Sol Green Reserve was around improvement to the play equipment (range and mix), improving and maintaining the basketball and netball court and improving the lighting to make the park feel safer at night. Officers will use the feedback provided to help shape the initial concept design. The feedback received is one of the elements that helps inform the design of the park. Other inputs include Council strategies, Australian Standards, cost and environmental considerations.

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who provided their feedback as part of the Sol Green Reserve Park Upgrade consultation. Your feedback will help Council decide how we upgrade the reserve with consideration to what the community would like to see.

Next steps for this project:

- 1) Using the themes identified to inform the development of a concept plan
- 2) Seek further community input to confirm the concept plan responds to the communities needs
- 3) Incorporating the further community feedback to then inform the detailed designs, Crown consent and competitive public tender for construction in February 2025.