



Gasworks Art Park Playground Community Engagement Summary Report

August 2023





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.

A new playground is proposed to improve play opportunities at the park.

This document has been compiled following the conclusion of the Playground Draft Concept Design community engagement (consultation), 7 June to 28 June 2023.

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the draft concept design. Contributions could be made via the project Have Your Say page, direct email, and during on-site pop-up sessions. Key Stakeholder feedback has also been included in the responses. Of the responses received the following key themes were identified:

- Nature-play and natural character of the playground
- Playground Design elements
- Functional design elements such as fencing and shade

Key findings

Nature-play/natural character

was referenced 27 times. 14 responses expressed concern that the playground was out of place with the Gasworks natural setting. 6 responses were in favour of the proposed nature-play allocation and design.

Playground Design elements

was referenced 36 times. A range of responses were reported. 62% of comments referenced changing the proposed equipment. Discussion included questions about choice of playground equipment and offering ideas to amend the playground structures. 26% of responses were supportive of the playground design and equipment selected.

Functional design elements such as fencing and shade

Shade to the playground was referenced 22 times. Fencing was referenced 13 times. All comments related to a preference for shade structures and fencing the playground.

Feedback

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

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



Introduction

Project 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 a 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 the 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 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 3 Acres design to create a draft landscape concept plan taking into consideration CMAP guidelines to date.

The first round of community engagement was completed in April 2022 where respondents provided recommendations and comments on a draft concept plan for Gasworks Park.

This document has been compiled following the conclusion of the second phase of community engagement for the Gasworks Park Playground Concept Plan (7 June – 28 June 2023). Over the engagement period 48 responses were received through the City's online engagement platform – Have Your Say Port Phillip. 113 responses were received from face-to-face engagement and from key stakeholder sessions. Respondents provided recommendations and comments on what they liked and disliked about the concept design and changes or recommendations that would like to see in the space.



What we set out to achieve

The purpose of the engagement project was to:

- Share the Playground Draft Concept Plan with the community
- Seek community feedback on the design and what could be improved and;
- Build an understanding of community preferences in play equipment and balance of formal play and nature play



Engagement questions

Participants were asked the following questions:

- How often do you visit the park?
- Which play activities in the design do you or your children like?
 - Climbing
 - Interactive elements
 - Music
 - Nature play
- Are there any play elements missing from the design?
- Please rank your preference for the following play spaces:
 - Play equipment
 - Seating areas
 - Nature play
- What other elements do you like about the concept design?
- What elements in the concept design do you dislike?

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

- Age
- Gender; and
- Suburb.



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; and
- Two (2) community place-based pop-ups held on-site:
 - Saturday morning 17th June - Market day
 - Tuesday evening 20th June – to capture dog walkers
- Stakeholder meetings/workshops were conducted with:
 - Gasworks Park
 - Friends of Gasworks Park
 - Albert Park Secondary College – Staff and students
 - Albert Park Primary School – Staff and students

Participation

Participation snapshot:

- 386 page views of the Have Your Say page
- 334 visits (page visits from an external link) to the Have Your Say page by 239 visitors
- The Concept Design was downloaded 24 times.
- The Public Space Strategy was downloaded 12 times.
- The 2022 Engagement Summary Report was downloaded 12 times
- 48 survey contributions were received on the Have Your Say page (visits to the survey)
- 117 contributions were received at face-to-face sessions and stakeholder meetings/workshops
- 2 people followed the project page.
- Facebook (15K followers) and Instagram (7K followers):
 - 1.6K accounts reached across Facebook and Instagram
 - Facebook - 9 reactions, 10 comments, 2 shares and 300 engagements
 - Instagram - 25 likes and 12 shares



Strategies to support participation

Community participation was supported through the following initiatives:

- **Communications Campaign:** run through the City of Port Phillip. This included promotion on Council's corporate channels and social media, as well as signage at the site.
- **Dedicated Project Page:** a dedicated project page was created on Council's Have Your Say, a consistent location for the community to access information and participation via the survey.
- **Site activation:** two (2) on-site pops were completed on site, one (1) on a Market day on Saturday 17th June 2023 between 9am and 11am and one (1) at on an evening on Tuesday 20th June between 4:30pm and 6:30pm.
- **Postcard letterbox drop:** to residents and businesses within approximately 500 m of the reserve.
- **Social media posts:** on Council's Facebook and Instagram pages.



Who we heard from

Age of participants

The highest represented age group of participants was under 15 years, 29% of total participants.

The second highest represented age groups were 35 – 49 years (27%) followed by 50 - 59 years (13%) and 60 – 69 years (13%).

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

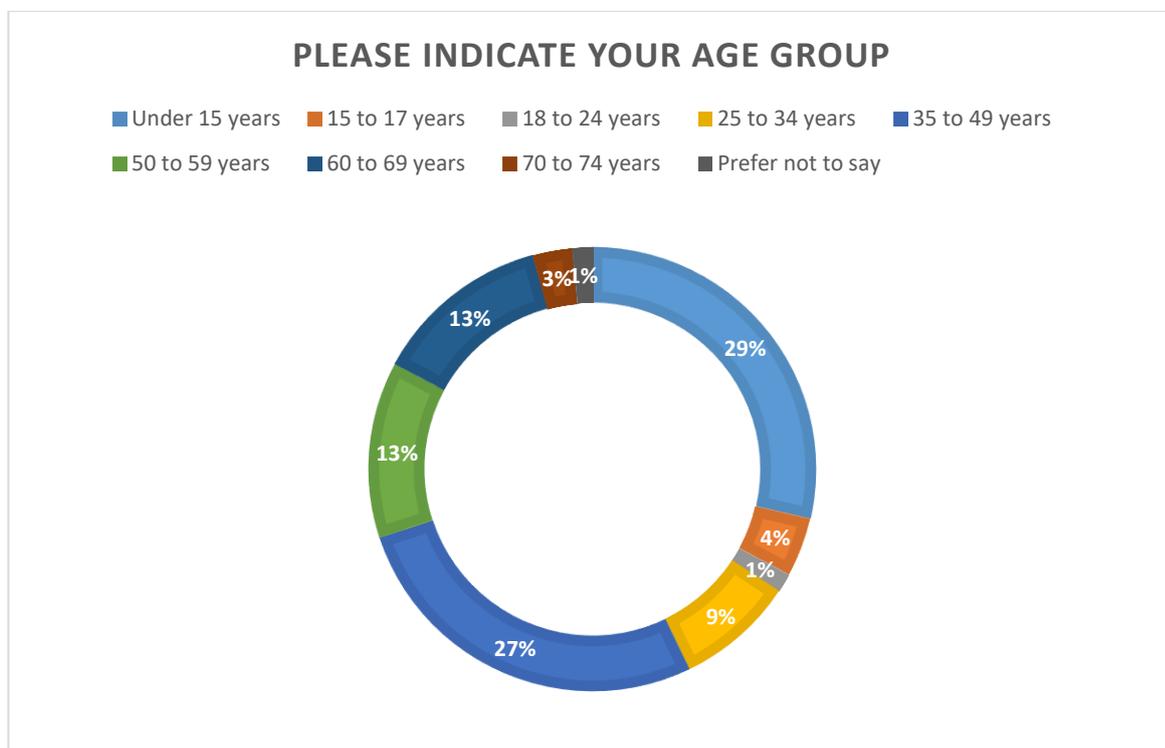


Figure 1: Participant age groups - includes online data and in-person children's data.



Gender of participants

98% of participants identified their gender, with 2% of participants saying they preferred not to say. Of those participants who identified their gender, 77% reported to identify as a woman or female and 20% identified as a man or male.

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

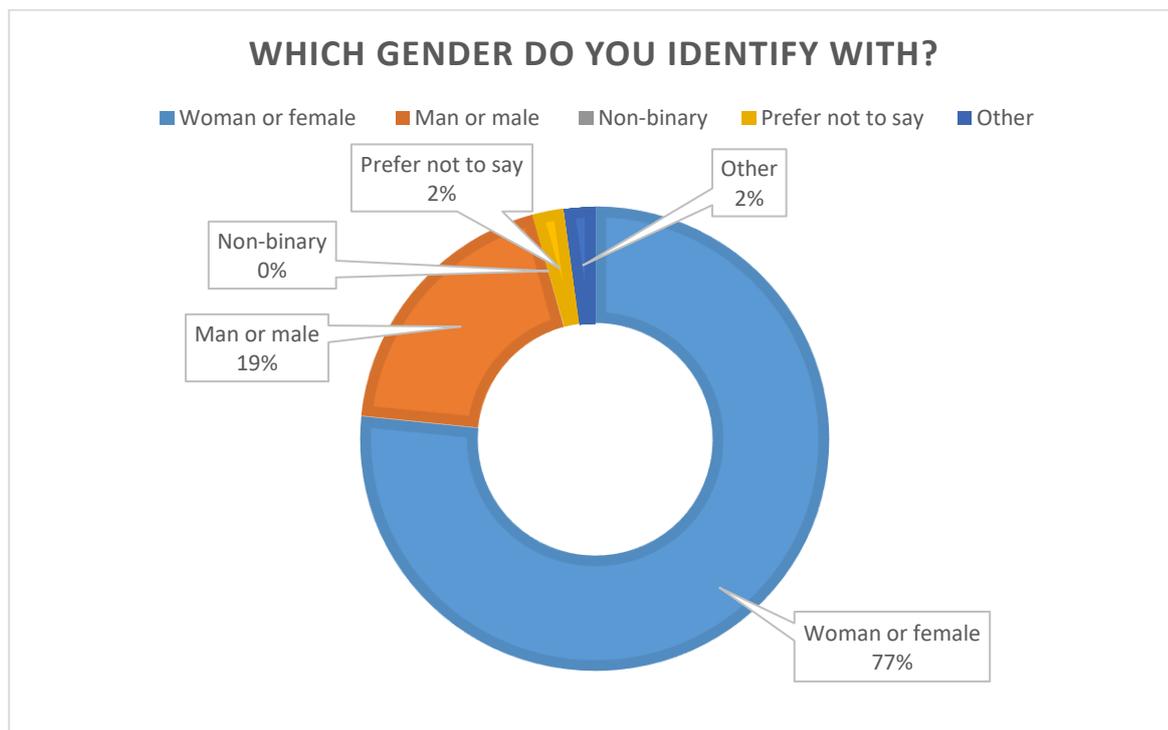


Figure 2: Participant gender



Participants by suburb

Participants were asked which suburb they lived in, with the majority of participants (46%) identifying that they lived in Albert Park. The next highest majority of participants (32%) identified that they live in Port Melbourne. The remaining participants lived in six (6) other suburbs within the City of Port Phillip. The proportion of residents in these suburbs ranged from 2 to 8%. There were no participants from Melbourne, Ripponlea, Southbank, St Kilda West and Windsor.

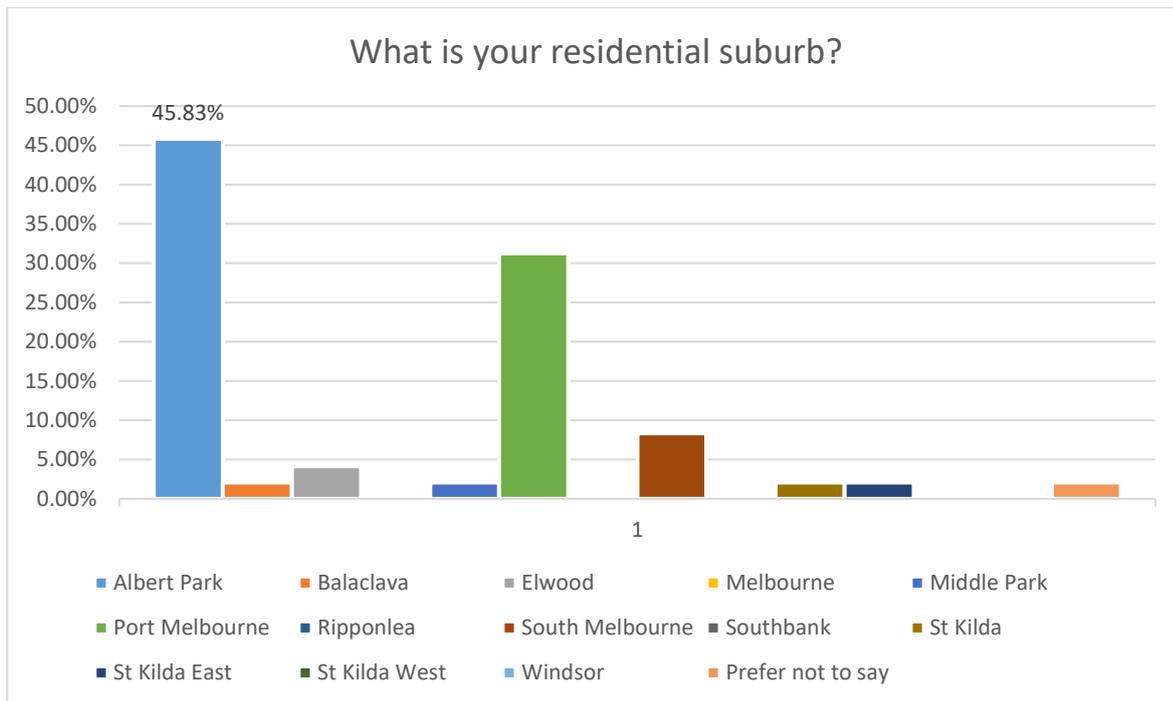


Figure 3: Participants' suburbs



Frequency of Visits to the Park

Participants were asked how often they visit Gasworks Park. The majority of respondents reported that they visited the park either daily (38% of respondents) or weekly (36% of respondents).

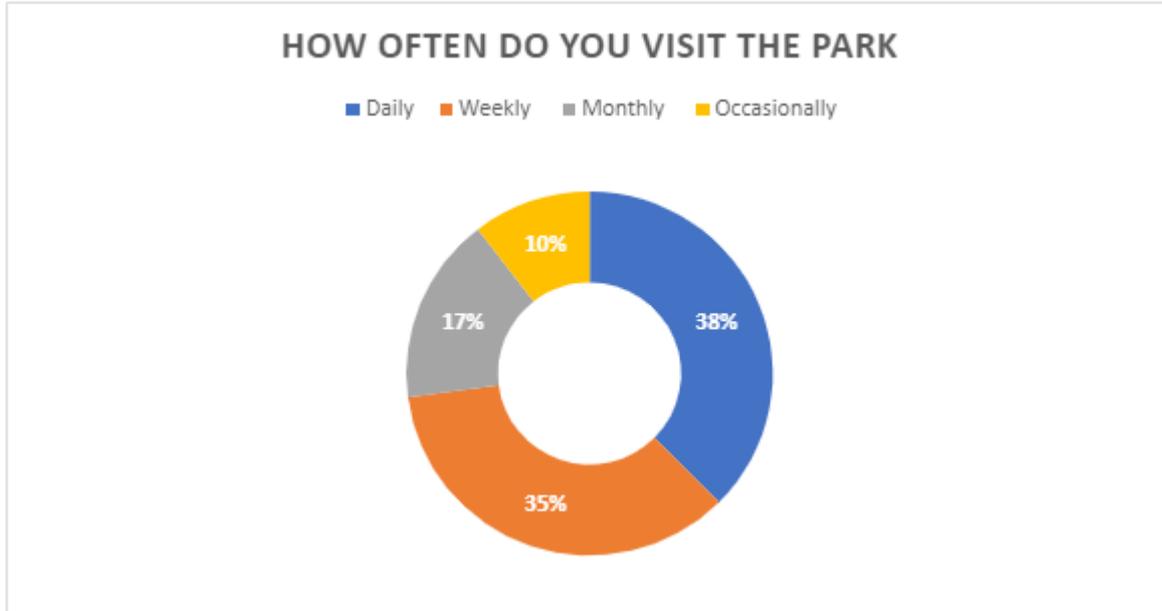


Figure 1: Participants' frequency of visits at the park



What we heard

Participants were asked if any elements were missing from the design, what they liked and what they disliked in the draft concept plan presented. A range of responses were reported. Key themes that arose from this question are tabulated below, including extracts from the comments received.

Q: Are any elements missing from the design?

This question received 57 responses from pop-up event attendees, online survey and from key stakeholders. The highest ranking responses are themed under 5 broad categories:

Theme 1

Change the equipment type

21 comments

“Swings are essential, slides (multiple) are essential, a shop window is essential...Steps or platforms up to a slide not rope... Kids love the little spring rocking horses. Wobbly bridges are great for learning balance. Trampolines please, most of us have no space for these in our current courtyards”

“More larger climbing structures - otherwise kids will return to climbing the trees”

Theme 3

Add Waterplay

8 comments

“Aerial bird bath so children can observe activity of birds in the canopy and develop appreciation for wildlife”

“Water spouts from the ground, like the ones in the Ian Potter's children's garden in the Botanical gardens”

Theme 2

Add shade

13 comments

“Sun cover and play areas for under 3 year olds”

Theme 4

Design should be more artful

7 comments

“I would say there is a distinct lack of artistic creativity in the actual play pieces. they look a little too "formulaic" rather than representative of the creative space that Gasworks is”

“Incorporate art (sculpture, painting, creative design) into the playground to spark children's imagination and introduce them to art”

Other comments included:

- More planting – 6 comments
- More/improved nature-play – 6 comments
- Add sport/fitness options – 6 comments



Q: What elements do you like about the concept design?

This question received 61 responses from pop-up event attendees, online survey and from key stakeholders. The highest ranking responses are themed under 4 broad categories:

Theme 1

Design/Layout

23 comments said:

"I like the bits under the playground because my little brother likes playing under stuff"

"I like that the design is restrained and mostly natural materials used. I think the site is most suitable as it's quite small, contained and away from the larger part of the park"

Theme 2

The Location

11 comments said:

"I love the playground's location (corner Pickles & Graham St) - it's an under-utilised part of the park, thoughtfully away from where the dogs are active in the park, the proximity to the cafe, parking in Graham Street and the

"Location is perfect, both safe and will not impact existing park usage (market, dogs etc...)"

Theme 3

Accessible options

8 comments said:

"It's design is considerate of all ages and accessibility and I can envision outdoor time at the space for the local kindergarten kids, Port Phillip Specialist School students and older residents"

"Interactive / communication board, Slides and swings...the accessibility aspect is very welcome"

Theme 4

Nature-play

6 comments said:

"Fits well with the current 'back to nature' feel of the current park"

Nice use of the existing space. Working with nature to produce an area the younger members of the community

Other comments included:

- Play structures – 5 comments
- Material choice – 4 comments



Q: What elements in the concept design do you dislike?

This question received 66 responses from pop-up event attendees, online survey and from key stakeholders. The highest ranking responses are themed under 4 broad categories

Theme 1

No fence to playground

13 comments said:

"The play area should be fully fenced. This is an off leash dog park which also has dog training activities. To keep both children and dogs safe, fully fencing the playground will stop dogs

"I'm very nervous about the proximity to the large dogs"

Theme 3

The design does not have a natural character

9 comments said:

"It looks cold and sterile, in a time where we suffer a great loss of biodiversity it is a disgrace that you want to cut trees and bushes"

"Instead of destroying more nature and wildlife to make room for sterile and boring play equipment, you should integrate the natural surroundings and develop educational activities where children can explore the beautiful natural surroundings including the unique wildlife that the park has to offer."

Theme 2

The design

10 comments said:

"There doesn't appear to be much play equipment. The children may get bored quickly."

"I think more could be done with the...tall tower. It doesn't look like it is useful- more a piece of sculpture. It would be great to be able to climb the tower to a lookout or spiral walkway"

Theme 4

No shade structure

9 comments said:

"Maybe some shade (other than the tree plantings) over seated areas?"

"There appears to be not enough shelter from the sun over the play equipment and seating areas."

Other comments included:

- The location – 3 comments
- Design is not distinctive – 3 comments

Preference of new playground amenities

Participants were asked what new playground activities they would like to see included as part of the design. Participants could nominate more than one (1) activity. 185 responses were received. A breakdown of the responses can be seen in Figure below.

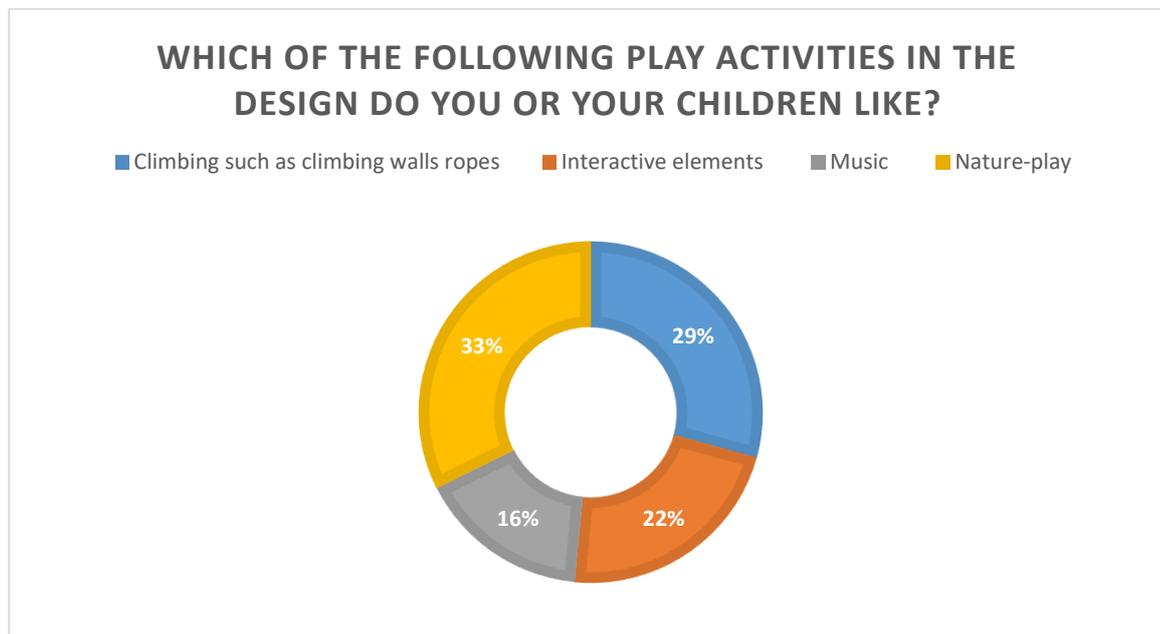


Figure 5: New amenities identified by participants

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who provided their feedback about the Gasworks Arts Park Playground project. Your feedback will help Council to make decisions to create a facility that aligns with how the community will use the space and inform Council's decision making about this project.

Next steps for this project are:

- Findings from this report will be shared with Councillors; and
- Communicated with the community on the project Have Your Say page.