

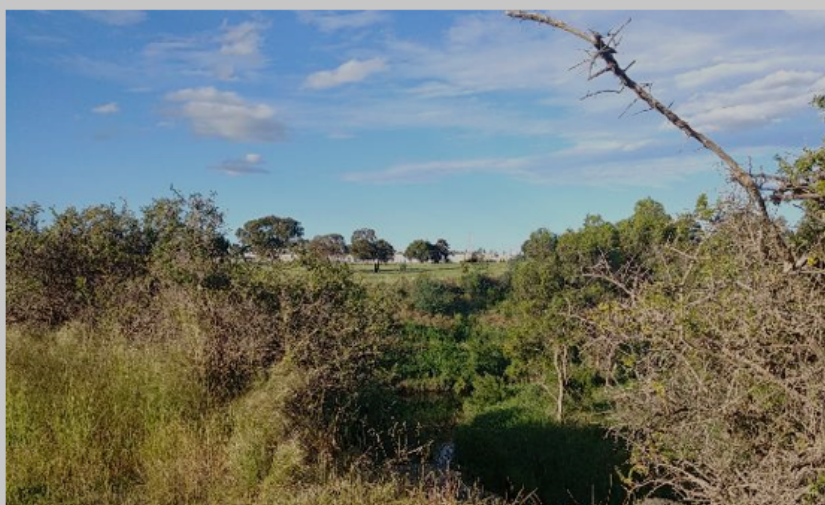
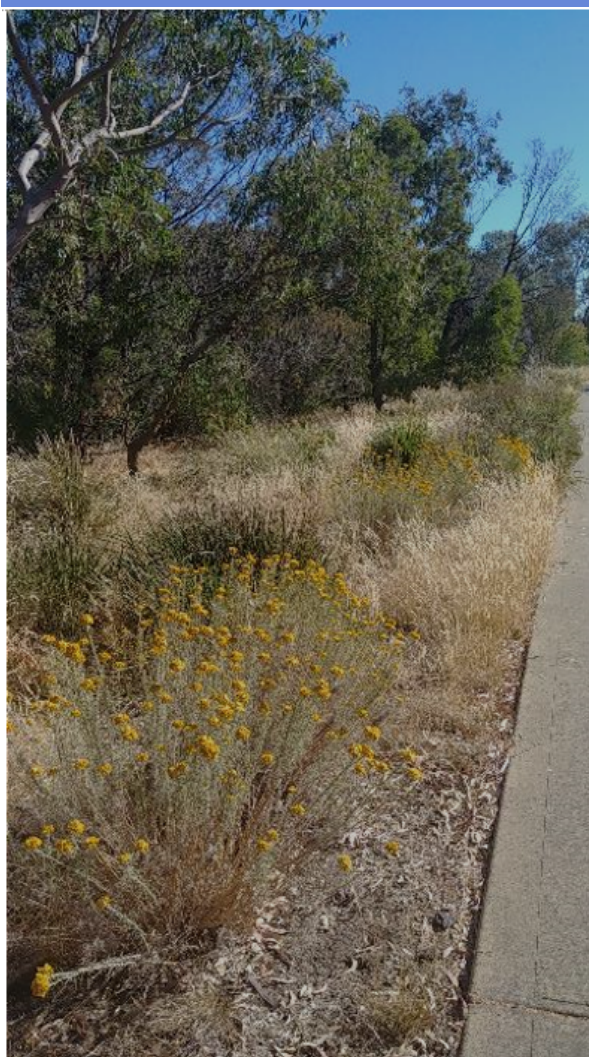
Fawkner Merri Creek Parklands Plan

Stage 1-2 Community Engagement summary report

Prepared by

Open Space Design & Development Unit

8 February 2023



Fawkner Merri Creek Parklands Plan

Engagement summary report

February 2023

The Parklands covers 75 hectares of open space along the Merri Creek in Fawkner and Coburg North. The Plan has been prepared to identify, protect and enhance the environmental, cultural heritage and community open space values.

1. Background

Council's Open Space Design and Development unit have conducted two engagement phases with the local community, these being:

- Initial Consultation (stage 1)

Council asked the community to share stories and what they would like to protect and enhance in their parklands.

- Draft Parklands Plan Engagement (stage 2)

Using results from the initial consultation, Council developed a draft concept plan based on the community's initial input. Community were asked to respond to the Plan.

Consultation timings:

Stage 1 Initial consultation on community vision, ideas and background: November 2020 – May 2021

Stage 2 Feedback on the Draft concept plan : 19 October - 10 November 2021

Council have twice notified 2,850 households living within 500m walking distance of the Parklands, erected 18 posters, set up an interactive online mapping and feedback option through Conversations Merri-bek and held pop-up engagement sessions, walks and nature based activities in the parklands.

In Stage 1, Council asked the Merri-bek community to map their experiences and ideas, and also what they like about the Fawkner Merri Parklands and what improvements they would like to see.

Strengthening the natural values was identified as a key priority together with improving community connections to the parklands and nature.

Over 90 people attended pop up site meetings at five separate locations and 76 people posted online suggestions. Separate onsite walks, meetings and online discussions were held with key stakeholder groups (Friends of Merri Creek, the Fawkner Residents Association and Merri Creek Management Committee and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation) and Council Units (Local Laws, Recreation, Open Space Maintenance, Community Development and Capital).

The draft plan was developed by Merri-bek City Council in consultation with the local community, the Friends of Merri Creek, the Fawkner Residents Association and Merri Creek Management Committee. Two stages of community engagement have been undertaken and a Cultural Values Study completed by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. Stage 1 gathered ideas and stories from the community and key stakeholders between November 2020 and May 2021 (extended engagement occurred due to COVID lockdowns). Community feedback was very positive and complementary. Work on the Plan was then paused for a year by Executive to clarify the priorities and budget implications of park master planning.

A draft Plan with concept plans was developed in October 2022 and shared internally within Council and with key stakeholder groups prior to going out for 8 weeks of community engagement from November 2022 to January 2023. The draft Plan attempted to balance the role of the creek as a primary waterway biodiversity corridor with the need to maintain drainage and key service easement functionality while meeting the increasing needs of the local community for open space and recreational access. Feedback online and during pop-up site meetings was very supportive with the only concerns raised around the location and scale of proposed park activation around Sahara Way Fawkner.

Community Engagement Summary

Key themes arising from the consultation included:

- **Conservation and natural values:** Priority is the protection and enhancement of the natural values of the waterway. Most respondents recommended the enhancement of the natural elements of the creek and restorations and improvements of wildlife habitat.
- **Litter:** respondents were concerned about the significant amount of litter distributed throughout the creek especially after heavy rain.
- **Transport:** respondents recommended path improvements throughout the creek corridor to make it easier to connect with the shared path and natural spaces. Maintenance of existing informal paths and alternative flooding routes were regularly raised. Additional wayfinding signage was regularly requested. Care was requested to ensure that there was no duplication of the shared trail planned.
- **Signage:** respondents saw opportunity for additional interpretative signage about the history of the creek and park.
- **Cultural Heritage:** respondents called for greater engagement with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Traditional Owners on land management, naming, signage and engagement events.
- **Dogs:** some respondents were concerned about conflict between dogs/shared path users, wildlife and park users, with requests for more: fencing to separate users and drinking fountains with dog bowls. Many people acknowledged that majority of dog owners shared the space respectfully which improved overall perceptions of safety.
- **Recreation:** respondents requested more social recreational facilities like basketball half-courts, cricket pitches, and soccer nets. Many requested access to existing sporting pavilions and toilets for community meeting spaces and events, such as Nature Stewards, nature based citizen science, and community meetings. Most respondents celebrated the existing sporting facilities and clubs for their positive contribution to the parkland and willingness to share sportsfields with other users. Some concerns were raised about balancing the habitat values of the waterway with sportsfield lighting. All respondents were not supportive of additional sportsfields in particular synthetic pitches.
- **Anti-social behaviour:** respondents were very concerned about the trail bikes dangerous and illegal use of the shared path and parklands with incidents reported to VicPol. There were also concerns about hoon activities within the existing car parks at Moomba Park and Parker Reserve.
- **Integrated water management and wetlands:** respondents supported the establishment of the wetland in Moomba Park and the increased diversion of stormwater in to the parklands to help mitigate urban heat island effect, improve habitat values and reduce local flooding.
- **Play Spaces:** respondents called for improvements to the two playgrounds at Moomba Park and Parker Reserve while acknowledging they were popular and well designed. There were many calls for more opportunities for nature-based play including bush kinders throughout the parklands.
- **Lighting and safety:** some respondents suggested improvements to lighting along the Merri Creek trail whereas the majority were not supportive unless the lighting provided wildlife sensitive lighting for key movement routes such as key bridge crossings to Reservoir at path between Railway Parade to Northumberland Rd and would like to see increased safety measures in car parks.

The suggestions and comments provided have informed the development of the draft Plan. Refer to Appendix C for further detail on completed Community Consultation.

Refer to the detailed engagement summaries for each stage.

5. Next Steps

In March 2023, the draft Plan and Budget will be presented for endorsement to go out for Stage 3 community engagement for a further 8 weeks.

7. Further information

Any questions can be directed to Council's Open Space Design & Development Unit via email openspace@moreland.vic.gov.au or by phoning 9240 111.

8. Appendix

Below are all examples of the engagement materials and feedback received from the community for each stage of consultation for Merri Creek Parklands Plan.

7a Consultation material



Fawkner Merri Parklands Plan

Wurundjeri Consultation
16 March 2021

1. Context
2. Elements of the Plan
3. Next steps

Alex English
Moreland Open Space Planner





Plate 1 On-Country Thursday 25 November 2021

Figure 1: Stage 1 engagement with the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners on the Parklands Plan. A Cultural Values Report was prepared and has informed the Plan.



We are planning conservation and park improvements along the Merri Creek in Fawkner and Coburg North.

The proposed works protect and enhance the natural values of this important waterway.
We are also proposing some park improvements including new park and picnic facilities, accessible paths, public toilets, and new nature based play spaces.

Information sessions
For feedback or to join one of our information sessions:

Saturday 17 December

- 10-11.30am, Parker Reserve car park, Coburg North
- 12-1pm, Sahara Way Fawkner

Sunday 18 December

- 1.30-3pm, Hood Crescent, Fawkner
- 4.30-6pm, Moomba Park playground, Fawkner

Saturday 14 January

- 1-2.30pm, Parker Reserve car park, Coburg North
- 3-4.30pm, Moomba Park playground, Fawkner

Feedback closes 5pm Monday 16 January 2023.

conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/what-your-vision-fawkner-merri-parklands

Share your vision

Online
conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/what-your-vision-fawkner-merri-parklands

More Information
We are available to discuss the draft plan with residents who cannot attend the information sessions.
Email: aenglish@merri-bek.vic.gov.au
Phone: 9240 1111



Review draft plans

Merri-bek Language Link

Italiano	Italian	9280 1911	Türkçe	Turkish	9280 1914	普通话	Chinese (Simplified)	9280 0750
Ελληνικά	Greek	9280 1912	Tiếng Việt	Vietnamese	9280 1915			
عربي	Arabic	9280 1913	नेपाली	Nepali	9280 0751			

National Relay Service:
13 36 77 or relayservice.com.au

Figure 2: Stage 2 poster displayed throughout the Parklands

7b Draft Plan Consultation Material



Fawkner Merri Parklands Plan

FoMC Committee member, **JANE MILLER**, tells us about the tour of Fawkner Merri Parklands, with FoMC members on 27 February.

Moreland Council is presently doing a public consultation on improving and upgrading the 71 hectare parkland corridor along Merri Creek between Moomba Park in the north and Parker Reserve in the south.

The consultation actually kicked off with Alex English, Moreland Open Space Planner, presenting at our AGM in November last year. This tour followed up on that and was led by Alex and Tony Faithfull, FoMC Life Member and flora expert. Seventeen people, mostly Friends members, joined the tour with some cycling from Parker Reserve, while others chose to walk, and the two groups met at Leonard St, Fawkner.

Habitat and biodiversity issues were highlighted, including protecting and extending Swamp Wallaby habitat. Swamp Wallabies are vegetation browsers while the Eastern Grey Kangaroos, sometimes seen at Bababi Djininang, are grazers on grasslands.

A new wetlands area can be created north of Somerlayton Crescent at Moomba Park using diverted stormwater. This would create habitat for the endangered Growling Grass Frog and other frog species.



Alex English (at back pointing) shows people in indigenous vegetation at Moomba Park Fawkner

There needs to be coordination with neighbouring councils, over habitat and path links, so animals can move along the creek corridor, but also to better control invasive weeds. The tour identified potential sites for paths, benches, public toilets, water fountains. Opportunities for tree and vegetation planting, issues with invasive weeds (including Prickly Pear).

One issue was mountain bikers, seen on a single track on the east side of the creek among Boxthorn in what is regarded as wallaby habitat.

More people are walking dogs in these parklands, with recent incidents of wallabies being chased and mauled. There needs to be more and clearer signage for dog walkers and public education.

Some high value sites may need fencing to protect wildlife and vegetation. Domestic cats killing small mammals and birdlife is also a substantial problem, probably needs a public education campaign to keep pets in at night.


Continued overleaf



Tony Faithfull shows people remnant grassland at Leonard St Fawkner

Figure 3: The Friends of Merri Creek assisted with the promotion and input in to the draft Plan.


A Merri Creek Parklands Plan



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conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/what-your-vision-fawkner-merri-parklands

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Email: aenglish@merri-bek.vic.gov.au or call 9240 1111

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العربية	Arabic	9280 1913	नेपाली	Nepali	9280 0761

普通话 Chinese (mainland)

9280 0759

National Relay Service:

13 36 77 or relyservice.com.au




Figure 4: Stage 2 community engagement postcards distributed to 2,850 households within 600m of the Parklands.

7c Draft Plan Concepts

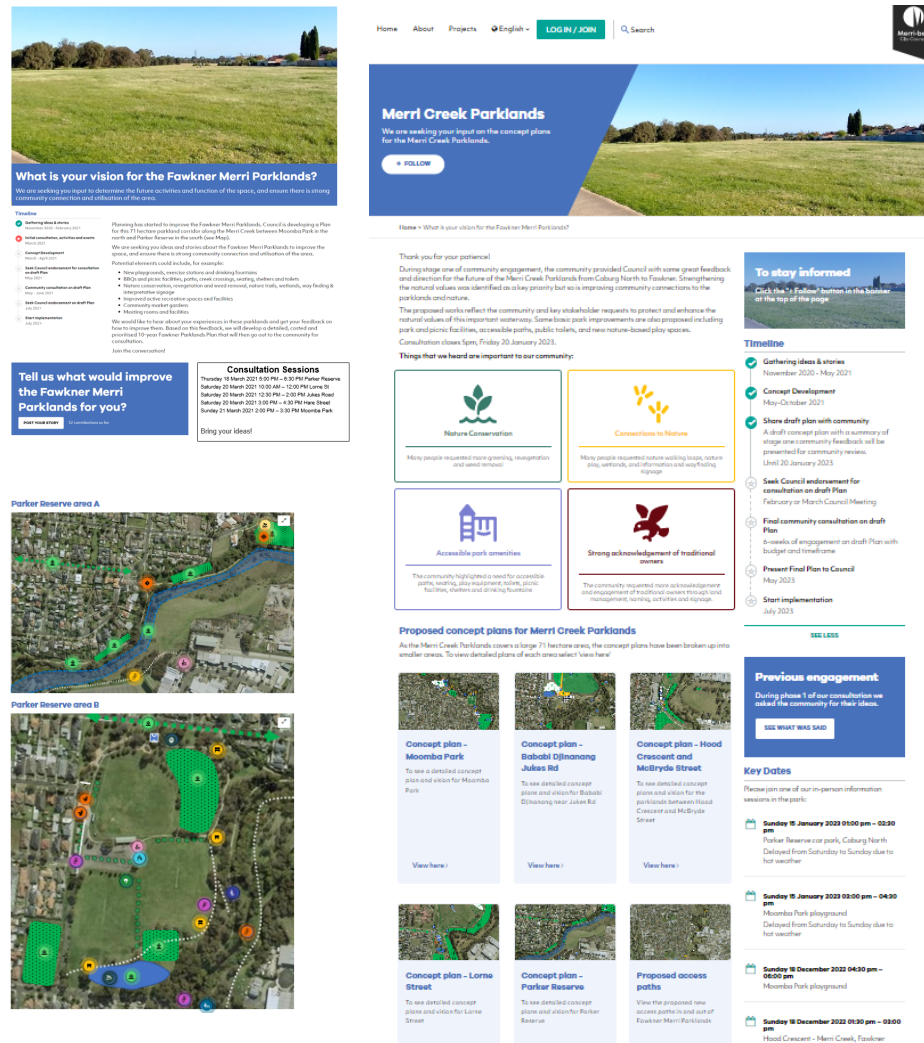
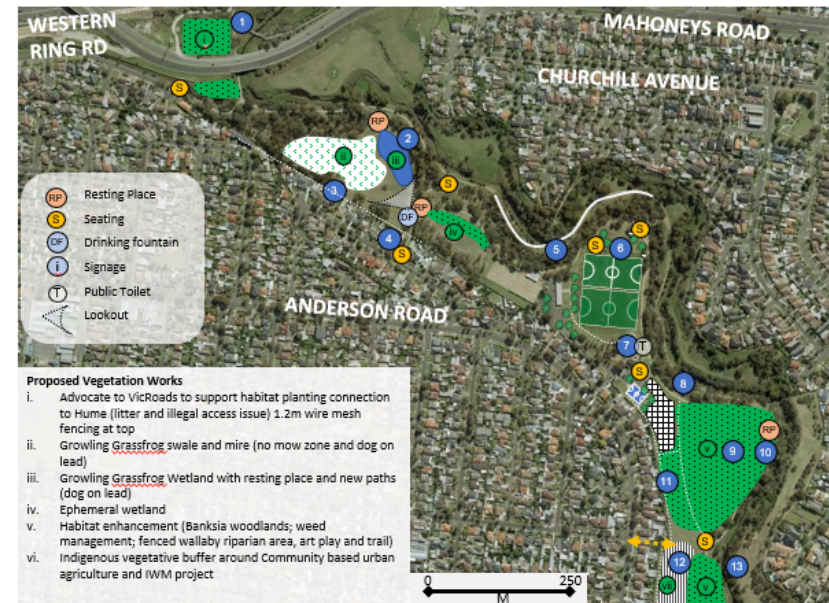


Figure 5: Conversation Merri-bek Website with plans and engagement

1a FAWKNER MERRI CREEK PARKLANDS - MOOMBA PARK PROPOSED WORKS



1. Advocate to State Government and Hume and Whittlesea Councils for strengthened Merri Creek Trail and habitat connections
2. Growling Grassfrog Wetland with resting place, interpretation, new accessible paths & Waterwatch
3. Maintenance and fire access track
4. Improve Somerlayton entry and create ephemeral wetland with Banksias and understorey planting
5. Accessible concrete path connections to creek bridge
6. Demolish and relocate cricket nets, create spectator and habitat mound; consider line marking 2 x junior fields; update perimeter fencing with openings; create warm up space at southern end
7. Convert south side social pavilion to community meeting space and accessible public toilet; create food truck powered site in car park
8. Investigate new recreation opportunities: fenced dog park, futsal goals, cricket nets, circuit path, exercise stations
9. Develop habitat enhancement plan with interpretation, habitat hollows; open grasslands; Banksia woodlands; habitat fencing & weed management
10. Art and nature play loop, bush kinder and riparian vegetation protection
11. Construct fire break maintenance track and remove invasive weeds from rear of property (agave and prickly pear)
12. Investigate community market garden and food forest social enterprise
13. Investigate improved maintenance connection to Reservoir with rock ripple or pedestrian bridge

Figure 6: Concept Plans shared with the community through online feedback.