

PROPOSED ESPLANADE CLOSURE

WHAT WE HEARD

Thank you to everyone who participated in the initial consultation phase for Pier Street, Weaver Reserve and the Esplanade. Whether you submitted feedback via the online survey, joined the online conversation, emailed us, had a conversation with the project team online at one of the online drop in sessions or left a comment on one of the social media posts all this feedback has been collated and a summary of what we heard is presented below.

Where possible, your feedback has been used to help shape the final concept plan for this project.

About the project

Over the last two summers, Council has been trialing a closure of the Esplanade between Bent Street and Pier Street.

The closure of the Esplanade, seeks to link the beachfront with nearby reserves, the Altona Lifesaving Club and the many cafes and shops on Pier Street, while improving pedestrian safety in one of the western suburbs' most popular summer hotspots. While the last two summer's trials have proven successful, it is now time to decide what happens in this space permanently.

During previous community consultation relating to the closure of the Esplanade, we heard that the majority of people were supportive of the closure and enjoyed spending time in the pedestrian only space with family and friends. However, there was concern about the limited shade provision in the space and that it still 'felt like a road'.

Positive feedback was received regarding the pop-up park and the activation within this space including the seating, beach huts, basketball hoops, table tennis and other games. The community commented that this turned the space into a destination rather than a space to only pass through.

A significant portion of the community supported the permanent closure of the Esplanade. However, there were mixed results on whether this should be a permanent year-round closure or whether the closure should occur only during summer.

Three concept options were presented to the community as part of this consultation:

- A permanent road closure that will enable Council to remove the road surface and integrate the beach with Weaver Reserve and provide a pedestrian friendly plaza.
- A seasonal summer closure, which leaves the road intact but activates the space similar to the existing summer closures.
- No closure and people can travel the Esplanade using cars all year round.

This consultation process was undertaken alongside five other projects including:

- Pier Street Stage 4 Streetscape project;
- A proposed Esplanade Closure between Bent Street and Pier Street;
- The raising of the seawalls, shared trail realignment and upgrade of the Webb Street Pedestrian Beach Access;

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- The Altona Beach Entry, a new Pedestrian Beach Entry at the bottom of Pier Street; and
- The Altona Pier Redevelopment, this project is being undertaken by Parks Victoria.

Council made the decision to undertake the design and consultation process for these projects collectively as these projects interact with each other and by integrating the design processes we can achieve a seamless design, providing a better outcome for the Altona community.

The concept plans presented to the community for this consultation process were developed using the information and feedback gathered from the two previous years' consultation of the Altona Beach Summer Closure trials which saw the closure of the Esplanade between Bent Street and Pier Street and the creation of parklets in Pier Street between Queen Street and the Esplanade.

Who got involved

The consultation process for the Altona Beach Precinct ran from 26 July 2020 through to 24 August 2020. Across the five Council projects included in the Altona Beach Precinct consultation it had a reach of over 69,000 people via social media, with over 5,500 people visiting the online engagement component of the project which generated 579 responses to the consultation from 415 individual contributors. Three online community drop-in sessions were held that were attended by 5 people. There were also meetings with key stakeholders including the Emergency Services, AVTA, Louis Joel and the Altona Lifesaving Club.

What we heard

59.64% of respondents indicating that they would like to see a permanent closure of the Esplanade. Comments received by the community were that they love it, that it has a great community feel to it and makes people feel safe within the space. This is then backed up by 74% of respondents preferring concept option three from the Altona Beach Precinct Concept Plans which detailed a full permanent closure of the Esplanade and the creation of a pedestrian plaza in this space.

On road cyclists accessing the Esplanade closure continues to be an ongoing issue and this will need to be addressed in the detailed design of the Esplanade closure.

Dominant themes of the Esplanade closure consultation include:

- That the community loves the concept of a permanent closure
- The removal of bikes from the Esplanade
- the inclusion of a water play component
- increased shade provision within the closure.
- That the closure generates a strong sense of community identity and makes people feel safer.



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- There is a growing push to close the Esplanade to Sargood Street and also Pier Street to Queen Street.

Next Steps

The final concept plan for the Esplanade Closure is now out for community comment. This second phase of the consultation process is to check in with the community's level of comfort on what is proposed in this space. The final concept plan reflects the direction provided by the community in the initial consultation phase held in August 2020.

Hobsons Bay City Council

115 Civic Parade, Altona
PO Box 21, Altona 3018

Telephone (03) 9932 1000
Fax (03) 9932 1039

NRS phone 133 677 and quote 03 9932 1000

Email customerservice@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au



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