

NEWPORT LAKES CONSERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WHAT WE HEARD (FEBRUARY 2022)

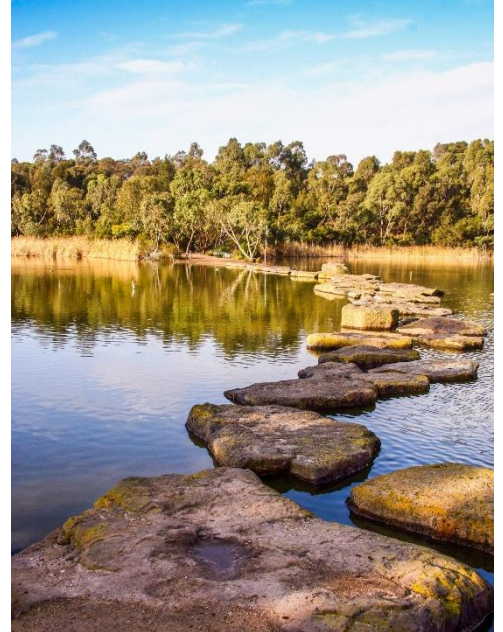
Background

The Newport Lakes Conservation and Improvement Plan has been prepared to identify, protect and enhance the environmental, cultural heritage and community open space values associated with the lake and surrounding open space area.

The plan seeks to balance the role of the reserve as a primary biodiversity conservation area whilst meeting the increasing needs of the local community for access to open space and passive recreation.

The draft plan has been developed by Thompson Berrill Landscape Design and Hobsons Bay City Council in consultation with key stakeholders and will be used to guide strategic planning and management actions, capital works and implementation priorities for the Reserve over the next ten years. It can be viewed online at:

participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/newport-lakes



The community engagement process

To help shape the plan, we engaged the local community from 29 September to 31 October 2021, to better understand how they currently use the space, its importance and what future improvements are required to protect and enhance the Reserve while meeting community needs.

Feedback was invited by either completing a survey hosted on Council's online engagement platform, Participate Hobsons Bay; attending an online drop-in information session (two sessions held in October) or by contacting the project team directly by email or phone.

6,900 postcards were distributed to Newport area to encourage community involvement in the project alongside a broader promotional campaign over social media.

Who got involved

The project's website on Participate Hobsons Bay received 1,852 site views from 1,239 individual site visitors during the engagement period from 29 September to 31 October 2021.

We received 301 survey submissions and five emails sharing feedback. Of these, respondents were mainly couples with children, aged 35-44 years with 64% identifying as female, 35% identifying as male and 1% identifying as non-binary or not disclosed. 57% of respondents live in Newport and 14% live in Altona North. Respondents living outside of Hobsons Bay make up 6% of total responses.

Two online community drop-in sessions were held via Zoom on Wednesday 27 October and Saturday 30 October 2021. Participants were invited to chat with Council officers, ask any questions they may have had and comment on the draft plan. Approximately 40 people attended these sessions.



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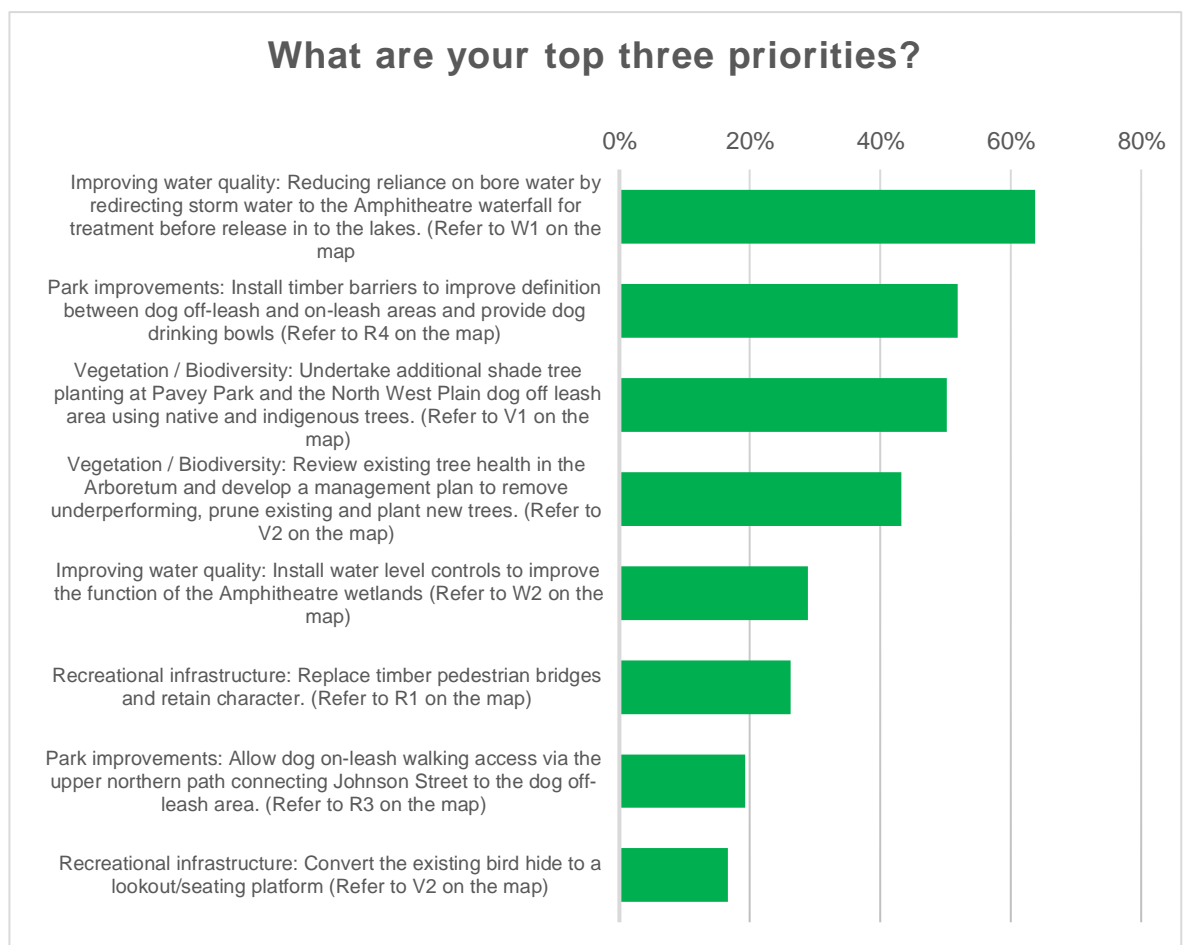
What we heard

Through the online survey, we heard that the Lakes Conservation Area is the most visited area of the Reserve and people visit the Reserve with family to either enjoy nature, exercise or see wildlife.

Most survey respondents are frequent visitors of the Reserve - over one-third of respondents visit the Reserve a few times a week while 29% visit daily.

A range of priorities and actions were identified within the plan for the lake and open space over the next ten years. When asked to rank these priorities, you told us your top three priorities were:

- 1. Improving water quality:** Reducing reliance on bore water by redirecting storm water to the Amphitheatre waterfall for treatment before release into the lakes (Refer to W1 on the map*)
- 2. Park improvements:** Install timber barriers to improve definition between dog off-leash and on-leash areas and provide dog drinking bowls (Refer to R4 on the map*)
- 3. Vegetation / Biodiversity:** Undertake additional shade tree planting at Pavey Park and the North West Plain dog off leash area using indigenous trees (Refer to V1 on the map*)



* maps can be viewed at: <https://participate.hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au/newport-lakes>



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We also asked you if you had any further feedback or comments on the plan.

The name of the plan has now substituted the word 'Development' for 'Improvement' as the former mislead some, when the real objectives is to improve and upgrade infrastructure to extend asset lifespans and ensure the Reserve can cope with current and future usage.

Overall, you supported the conservation of the Newport Lakes Reserve and in particular the Lakes Conservation Area. There was acknowledgement of this being a detailed and well considered plan. In your feedback, we heard some suggestions to improve the plan.

There was universal support for improving water quality in the Lakes to improve biodiversity and sustain a larger number of native plants and animals.

There was a strong desire to include further measures to ensure dogs are restricted to designated areas within the reserve. Ideas included to improve signage, install gates or barriers at entrances to the Lakes Conservation Area, provide fencing around the dog off-leash area and for more enforcement of local laws throughout the Reserve.

There was also concern for management of feral and domestic animals that have the potential to negatively impact native wildlife and habitats.

In addition to dogs, foxes and cats, bicycles in the Conversation Area was noted as a safety concern, and remarks were made that improved signage and barriers may prevent this issue.

Improved signage was called for throughout the Reserve, including maps and reserve information at entry points, educational signage on the history of the reserve and wildlife found here, and the use of plant and species labels.

Suggestions were also made to establish a café within Newport Lakes Reserve.

Within the North West Plain area, more bins were requested and for these to be emptied more frequently, along with pathway lighting, more benches and seating areas.

We heard mixed feedback regarding planting and vegetation management, with some calls for more native plants throughout the Reserve, some for more biodiversity in the vegetation and others for more shade trees.

Overall, there were requests for general maintenance throughout the reserve.

There were a variety of ideas and feedback shared regarding the upgraded play space in Pavey Park, the community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on concept designs at a later date.

Next steps

Thank you to all community members who got involved and shared their feedback on the draft Newport Lakes Conservation and Improvement Plan.

Council will consider all suggestions, comments and concerns when finalising the plan before sharing the final version on the project website:
participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/newport-lakes.



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