

BRAESIDE PARK VISITOR EXPERIENCE PLAN

Engagement Report
Feb 2020



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Traditional Owner Acknowledgement

Victoria's network of parks and reserves, of which Braeside Park is one, form the core of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation.

They are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns.

Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to Victoria's parks and reserves and ongoing role in caring for Country.

1. Executive summary

Braeside Park is a 310-hectare green-space oasis within Melbourne's south-east suburbs, currently experiencing growth in visitation as the surrounding residential areas expand.

A review of the planning framework for the park in 2019 recommended the need for a broadscale plan to provide a short to medium term strategy to guide management decisions. The primary goal of the park, as stated in the 1987 Braeside Metropolitan Park Master Plan Report, remains relevant; to provide recreational and education experiences that are compatible with protection and enhancement of the park's ecological and cultural resources.

As part of the development of the Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan, Parks Victoria met with key stakeholders and listened to the community to identify their needs and wants for the park. This feedback forms a fundamental evidence base for future decision making.

Stakeholders and the community told us they value Braeside Park for what it currently is, an oasis to enjoy nature and disconnect from the urban surrounds. Small facility improvements and future community activation initiatives are welcome, however there is a reluctance to introduce new activities or commercial operations within the park.

Parks Victoria will use this feedback in conjunction with broader regional strategies and Government priorities to develop the Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan that ensures Braeside Park continues to provide benefit to the Victorian community while conserving biodiversity and cultural heritage.

2. Introduction

Braeside Park is a green space oasis within Melbourne’s south-east suburbs. A review of the planning framework for the park in 2019 recommended the need for an overall plan for the park, a key component of which was to engage with stakeholders and the community to identify their needs and wants for the park.

Project overview

Parks Victoria’s strategy, *Shaping Our Future*, recognises the importance of conserving parks while providing opportunities for all people to enjoy Victoria’s special places.

The Braeside Metropolitan Park Master Plan Report, published in 1987, has not been recently updated or reviewed. The primary goal for the development and management of the park, however, remains relevant; to provide recreational and education experiences that are compatible with protection and enhancement of the park’s ecological and cultural resources.

This primary purpose of Braeside Park is to provide ‘diverse recreational and educational experiences for the metropolitan community, which are compatible with protection and enhancement of the park’s ecological and cultural resources’

– Braeside Metropolitan Park Master Plan Report 1987

Braeside Park received 501,000 visits during 2019. This represents a nearly 60% increase in visitor numbers since 2000. This may increase to around 600,000 by 2031 if it aligns with the predicted 30% increase Melbourne’s population.

The City of Kingston, within which Braeside Park is situated, is a diverse community with residents from over 150 countries of origin speaking 120 languages and following over 28 faiths. Around 20% of the population have a disability, and Kingston’s older residents make up the fastest growing population group in the municipality. There are over 40 multicultural senior groups in the municipality.

Braeside Park is a 310-hectare green-space oasis within Melbourne’s southeast suburbs, where access to large areas of public open space is limited. The park offers a variety of recreation opportunities and has significant environmental, Aboriginal and European cultural heritage values. The park’s Red Gum grassy woodlands, heathlands and wetlands are home to a diverse range of plants, birds, animals and reptiles.



Twelve kilometres of multi-purpose trails meander through the park, providing opportunities for walking, running and cycling. A gentle stroll can be taken through the interactive community garden or around the muralled art walls or tree stump art carvings. An adventure playground includes modules for both younger and older children including access for those with limited mobility. Barbeques and picnic facilities are available throughout the mown lawn areas.

The soon to be constructed Mordialloc Freeway will run along the western edge of the park. A heavily used walking track that runs from the adjacent industrial estate into the park will be retained via a tunnel under the bypass. This will provide continued pedestrian access into the western side of the park.

While Braeside Park is relatively small in the context of Victoria's network of parks and reserves, the park is highly regarded by the local community and holds significant environmental and cultural heritage value. The park plays a key role in City of Kingston's corridor of green space and is host to a range of community activities.

Community and stakeholder engagement

In 2019 and 2020, Parks Victoria undertook a two-stage engagement process to gather an understanding of the current values of the park, and test future opportunities in the park. The two stages were:

- Stage one – key stakeholders¹ and special interest groups identifying opportunities (Sept – Oct 2019)
- Stage two – general community feedback on ideas (Dec 2019 – Jan 2020)



¹ Throughout this report, all workshop participants will be referred to as 'stakeholders' and survey respondents will be referred to as 'the community'.

In the first stage, Parks Victoria identified key stakeholders and special interest groups they wanted to engage with initially to gain an understanding of the current value of the park and gather input towards future opportunities.

Stakeholders included Parks Victoria subject matter experts, Traditional Owners and City of Kingston planners. Special interest groups included the Friends of Braeside Park, the Braeside Walkers, Dingley Village Men's Shed and Southern Migrant Refugee Centre. These community groups are currently the most active groups operating in the park. To gather input from each of these varied stakeholders and groups, Parks Victoria hosted a series of workshops at Braeside Park's visitor centre. Each workshop focused on capturing the current value of Braeside Park to each stakeholder group and identifying future opportunities.

In stage two, Parks Victoria shared the ideas raised during the initial workshops with the broader community via a dedicated page on the Engage Victoria website. On the webpage there was a survey where community members could give their feedback on the ideas raised by key stakeholders in stage one.

The Engage Victoria website can be viewed here - <https://engage.vic.gov.au/shape-future-braeside-park>

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to document and summarise feedback received during Braeside Park's planning engagement process. This report includes feedback from three workshops in stage one and online survey in stage two.

Parks Victoria will use this information to develop an overall Plan for Braeside Park, addressing key issues raised by the community and prioritising future improvements based on community needs.

Report limitations

There are some limitations of the engagement process and reporting analysis that should be acknowledged.

Limitations include:

- Braeside Park is an area of significance to three Traditional Owner groups; Wurundjeri, Boon Wurrung and Bunurong. At the time of planning, the area does not have a Registered Aboriginal Party. Efforts were made to engage all three

Traditional Owner groups, but there was no formal partnership arrangement.

- Time restraints did not allow for Parks Victoria's subject matter specialists to complete the full planning workshop agenda. Time did not permit participants to map future activities within the



park. Parks Victoria subject matter experts will have an opportunity to comment on the draft Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan map prior to finalisation.

- Braeside Park's online survey was open from 9 Dec 2019 to 31 Jan 2020. During this time, it is likely some local visitors would have been on holiday and unaware of / unable to complete the survey.
- Parks Victoria encouraged workshop participants to promote the online survey via their networks and did not exclude workshop participants from completing the survey. This may have resulted in workshop participants giving feedback via workshops and the survey, resulting in duplication from some community members. However, given the overall number of survey participants was over 1,100 and there were 33 workshop participants, this is unlikely to have skewed the data.

3.

3. How did we engage

Parks Victoria met with a range of stakeholders to better understand the importance of Braeside Park to a range of people. Ideas raised during workshops were then put to the community to create a broader evidence base for decision making.

Engagement objectives

Parks Victoria sought to engage the community and stakeholders to inform the development of a Plan for Braeside Park. The engagement objectives were to:

- Identify the current value of Braeside Park to a broad range of visitors and special interest groups.
- Encourage ‘blue sky thinking’ to inform opportunities for the future.
- Test ideas raised by key stakeholders with the broader community.
- Provide an evidence base to make informed decisions for the future use of Braeside Park.

Details of Parks Victoria’s communication and engagement activities are shown in Table 1.



Table 1: Communication and engagement activities

Activity	Date	Audience	Purpose
Workshop 1	5/09/2019	Parks Victoria subject matter experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key values of Braeside Park • Identify issues and threats to Braeside Park • Identify current and future programs within Braeside Park
Workshop 2	17/09/2019	City of Kingston employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map ideas and parameters onto an aerial plan of Braeside Park
Workshop 3	17/10/2019	Community groups	
Engage Vic online survey	9/12/2019 - 31/01/2020	Park neighbours and visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek further ideas regarding future use of Braeside Park from general community • Gauge community interest in ideas proposed during workshops • Gain broader understanding of current values and use of Braeside Park
Survey promotion	9/12/2019 - 31/01/2020	Park neighbours and visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media release sent to south eastern suburbs media distribution network • Posters placed in Braeside Park and Karkarook Park • Email encouraging participation and network sharing sent to key stakeholder groups • Social media post by Parks Victoria, shared by City of Kingston and other relevant pages

4. Who we heard from

Parks Victoria heard from a range of stakeholders and a broad representation of the local community. Workshops held at Braeside Park Visitor Centre were well attended by invited stakeholders, and the Engage Vic online survey received over 1,132 responses from local residents and park visitors.

Workshop participants

Parks Victoria workshop attendees

Twelve participants from the South-East Melbourne District, the Melbourne Regional Operations Office, the Community Partnerships Directorate and the Marketing and Customer Experience Directorate attended a workshop at Braeside Park Visitor Centre on 5 Sept 2019.

City of Kingston workshop attendees

Nine participants attended from the City of Kingston, representing Parks and Open Spaces, Public Places, Strategic Planning, Environment, Engineering Design, Social Development and Community Development. This workshop was held at the Braeside Park Visitor Centre on 17 Sept 2019

Special interest group workshop attendees

Twelve participants from the Friends of Braeside Park, Dingley Village Men’s Shed, Braeside Walkers, Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre attended an evening workshop at Braeside Park Visitor Centre on 17 Oct 2019.

Survey respondent demographics

The following figures 1 - 8 describe the demographics of 1,132 respondents to Parks Victoria’s “Shape the future of Braeside Park” survey hosted on Engage Victoria from 9 December 2019 – 31 January 2020.

As illustrated in figures 1-8, the survey was completed by a broad section of the community. Participants were well spread across ages, and 20 per cent of participants identified as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse reflecting the cultural diversity of the surrounding community.

There was a significantly higher representation of women than men in the responses, 70 percent women.

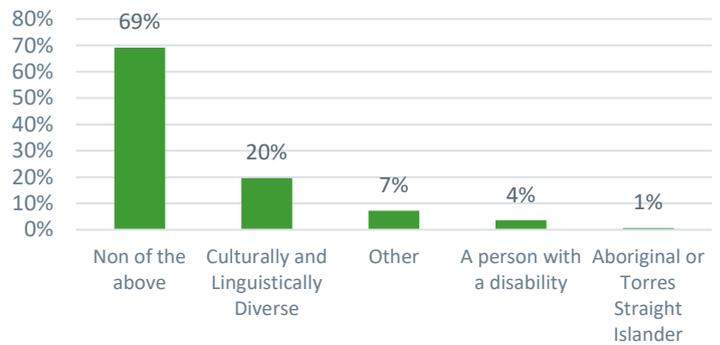


Figure 1: (Above) Diversity of survey respondents (n. 1,132)

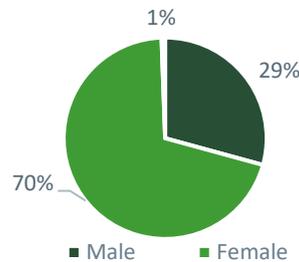


Figure 2: (Left) Gender of survey respondents (n. 1,052)



Figure 3: Age range of survey respondents (n. 1,101)

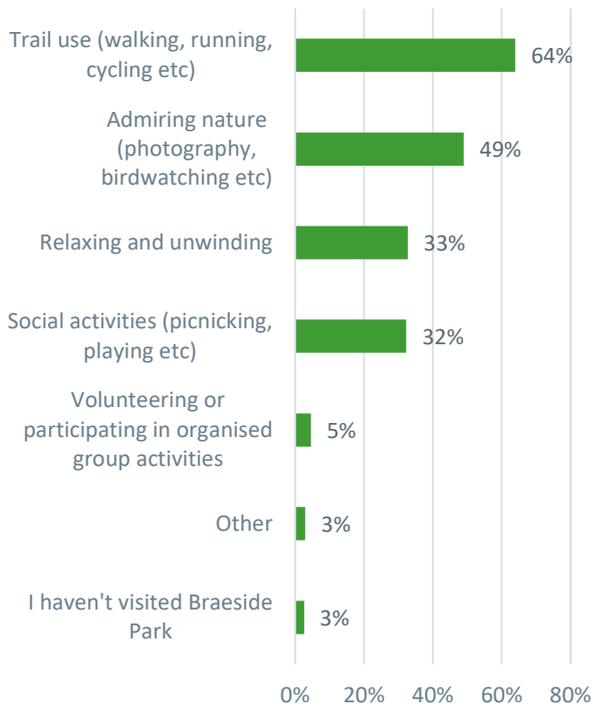


Figure 4: Primary activities undertaken at Braeside Park by survey respondents. Respondents could choose up to three options (n. 1,119).

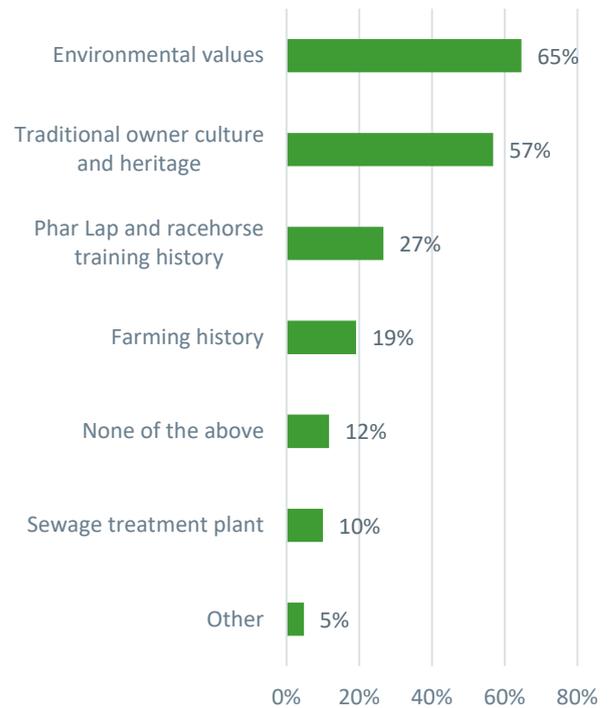


Figure 5: Topics of most interest to survey respondents. Respondents could choose up to three options (n. 1,070).

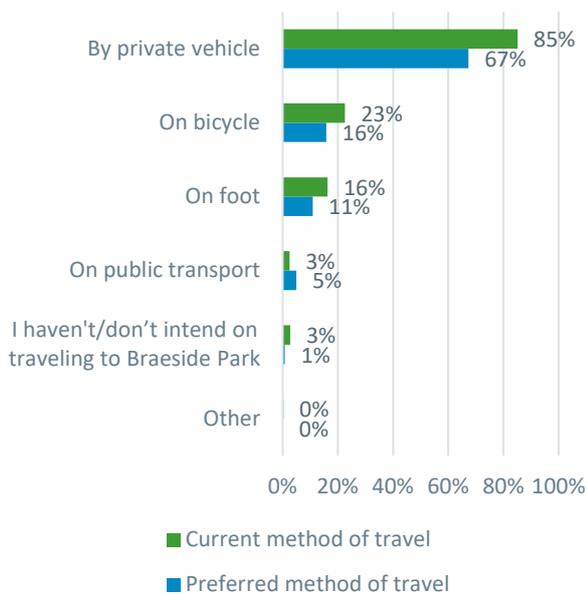


Figure 6: Method of travel to Braeside Park. (Current method of travel n. 1,113, preferred method of travel n. 1,125)

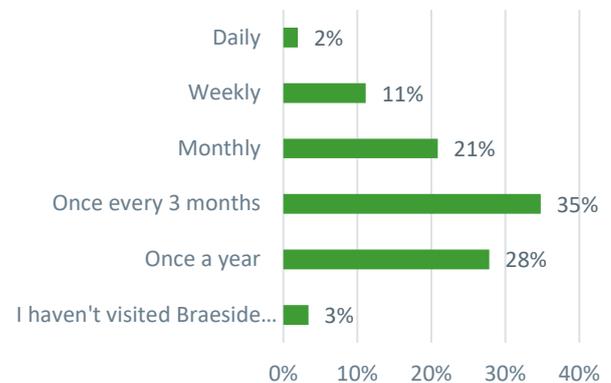


Figure 7: Survey respondents' regularity of visit to Braeside Park. Data represents the percentage (%) of respondents that selected one category (n. 1,121).

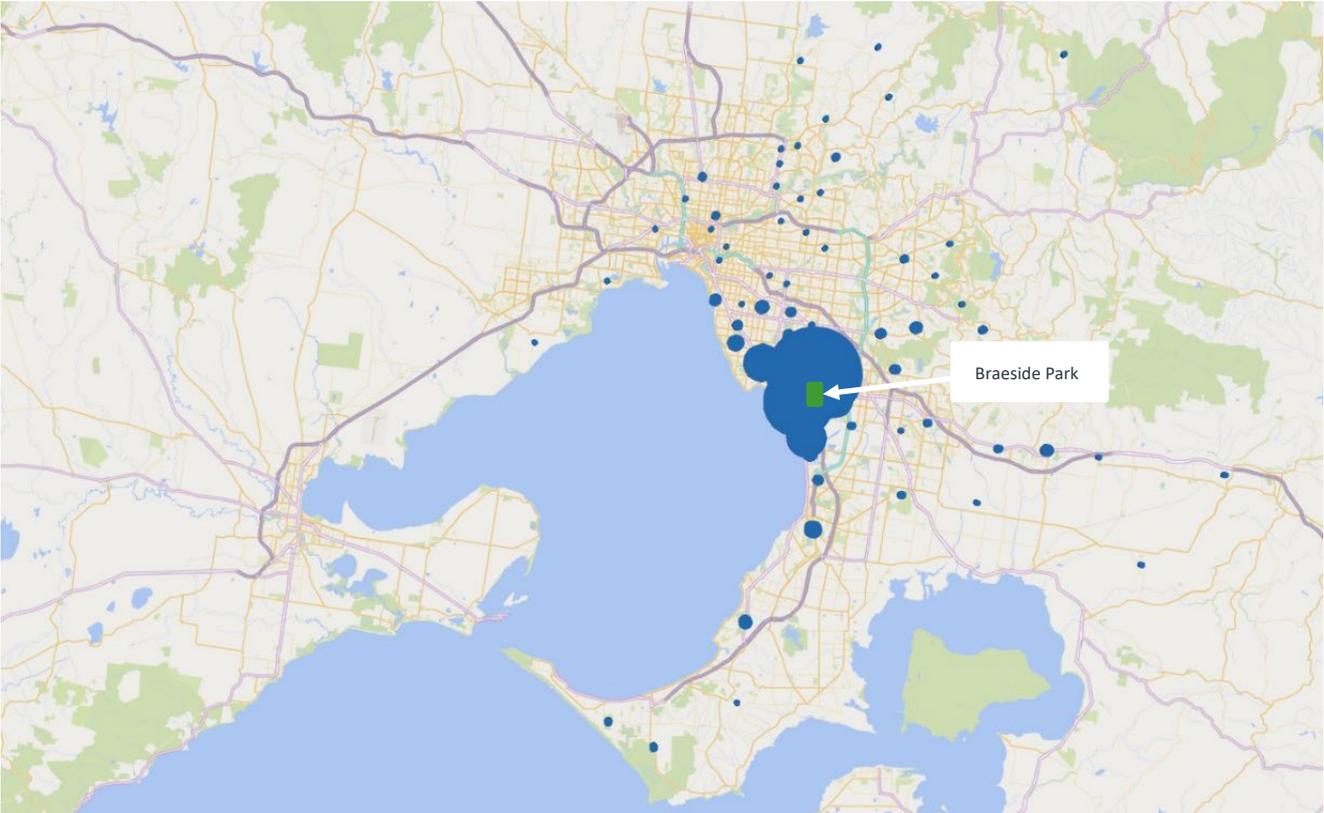


Figure 8: Geographic representation of survey respondents' post code. Larger circles represent a higher frequency of respondents living in the location.

5. What we heard

The community told us they value Braeside Park for what it currently is, an oasis to enjoy nature and disconnect from the urban surrounds. Small facility improvements and future community activation initiatives are welcome, however there is a reluctance to introduce new activities or commercial operations within the park.

Special features of Braeside Park

A broad range of special features and ‘gems’ of Braeside Park were identified by workshop and survey participants. These features were classified into seven broad themes as follows.

Environmental features

Stakeholders commented on the significant environmental features within Braeside Park, including diversity of native flora and fauna, ecosystems and significant species. Examples of ‘special things’ identified by workshop participants include ‘special orchids and lilies, significant trees, diversity of birds, and wetlands.

The community also expressed gratitude for Braeside Park’s environmental values, providing positive comments about the wildlife and natural beauty of the park.

“The Heathland and Grasslands are precious gems”
– Survey respondent

“I’m amazed at the number of echidnas you come across in the park” – Survey respondent

Cultural heritage and history

Cultural heritage and history of Braeside Park was noted as a special feature by stakeholders and the community. Topics raised include Aboriginal cultural connection to the site, past land uses and remnants of historical artefacts placed throughout the park. Farming, Phar Lap training and the sewage treatment plant were mentioned as interesting features.

“Would be great to showcase the history around Phar Lap.” – Survey respondent

Accessibility

Stakeholders raised Braeside Park’s accessibility to a large population as a special feature of the park. The park is close to many people, neighbouring highly populated residential areas in Melbourne’s southeast suburbs. In addition, the park was described as accessible for a range of visitors with limited mobility due to it being flat and availability of all abilities facilities at some locations.

Context of park

Braeside Park is valued by stakeholders and the community because it is a unique natural experience and an “oasis” amongst suburbia to escape, relax and unwind. The park is valued for having a point of difference to other open spaces in the area, with large areas of natural vegetation, no dogs and no commercial activities.

“It is an oasis in the middle of the suburban jungle” – Survey respondent

“This park is such a rarity and treasure to have so close to home.” – Survey respondent

The community highlighted the importance of Braeside Park in the context of the national bushfire emergency. Survey responses advocated for the heightened importance of conservation following recent large-scale biodiversity loss.

“Given the recent loss of half a billion animals in our country, protecting the diverse and endangered animals that you have at Braeside park, should be a top priority” – Survey respondent

Community and volunteers

Volunteering and community participation were highlighted as a significant asset to Braeside Park. Stakeholders commented on its value in bringing like-

minded people together, providing a space for social activities and sharing ideas. These activities were suggested to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the local community.

Diverse offer

Stakeholders commented on the diverse range of opportunities that cater for a broad range of visitors to Braeside Park. Key recreational opportunities mentioned include picnicking, playing, trail use and nature admiration.

The different ecosystems within Braeside Park were also identified by stakeholders as highly diverse, from open grassy areas to woodland and wetlands offering different scenery throughout the park.

Visitor facilities

Stakeholders and community mentioned the following facilities as being valuable to the visitors at Braeside Park: bird hides, playground, BBQs, trails, sculpture art, numerous tracks, nursery and men's shed.

Current issues and threats

A range of current issues and threats to Braeside Park were raised during stakeholder workshops and in open text responses in the online survey. The following seven categories describe the most common concerns raised.

Environmental threats

Invasive species and weeds were identified by stakeholders and mentioned in open text responses by 158 survey respondents. Concern was raised for the threat invasive species pose to the natural environment of Braeside Park. In particular, stakeholders and the community commented on the large rabbit population, presence of foxes, cats and the recent tree dieback due to psyllids/lerp.

“Better conservation of the heathland area. It needs weeding, is full of rabbits, and is poorly managed currently.” – Survey respondent

Information and interpretation

Signage improvements were raised by stakeholders and mentioned in open text by 106 survey respondents. Issues raised include current poor condition and lacking wayfinding signage and difficulties identifying the park from road entrances.

“More information about conservation, the history of the park, the animals and birds that reside there. The signs are getting old and faded.” – Survey respondent

The community showed interest in more interpretive signage and opportunities to learn more about the environmental values, Traditional Owner culture and heritage, and Phar Lap and racehorse training, shown in Figure 5 (page 9).

Access and connectivity

Stakeholders and the community raised concern regarding the appropriateness of current all ability facilities and their placement within the park. Suggested improvements to accessibility include accessible toilets located close to parking, more accessible paths and trails, and accessible bicycles for hire.

“As someone who is reliant on a mobility scooter, I love to be able to get around the park with my walking group. However, the trails are really uneven in places. If the surfaces were flatter then it would make it a lot more enjoyable.” – Survey response

“[Proximity of toilets to parking] is a major issue for carers and aged care workers wanting to give their participants outdoor experiences and quality of life.” – Survey response

Stakeholders raised concern for the current number of access points for bicycles and pedestrians around the boundary of the park. Comments from the community also highlighted a lack of safe cycle paths connecting Braeside Park with surrounding suburbs.

“A safe bike track to get to the park from surrounding areas would make a difference.” – Survey respondent

Stakeholders and the community identified challenges regarding vehicle flow through the park. Options for future consideration raised include connecting vehicle access between north and south sections of the park, directing vehicle traffic directly to the Visitor Centre, and reversing the direction of one-way vehicle traffic through the main car park to allow vehicles to enter at the first opportunity from Lower Dandenong Road or installing stop lights at the current entrance road.

Visitor behaviour

Concerns were raised regarding negative visitor behaviour in specific areas or at particular times of day within the park. The community also highlighted current issues of illegal rubbish dumping, vandalism and illegal camping.

Safety concerns

A portion of the community (8 survey responses) raised personal safety concerns that limit their visitation to Braeside Park. Fear of being alone and fear of male

presence in park was expressed, with calls for improved security measures such as better lighting and increased patrolling. Some members of the community commented that they would feel safer if they could visit with their dog.

“At times I have felt unsafe in the park as no one around and it is very bushy in parts.” – Survey respondent

“I used to use the park for walking exercise but have had a couple of uncomfortable experiences with people 'lurking' just off the trails.” – Survey respondent

“Especially do not feel safe at night running without my dog.” – Survey respondent

Facilities and infrastructure

Improvements were suggested to a number of existing facilities within Braeside Park. Prioritisation of facility improvements as ranked by the community is shown in Figure 10. The highest priority for improvement is for toilets, drinking water fountains and seating along trails.

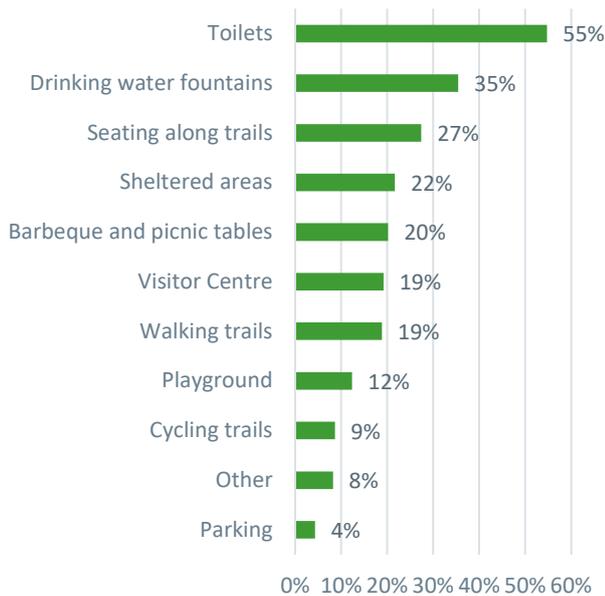


Figure 10: Facilities in highest need of improvement, as ranked by survey respondents (n. 970)

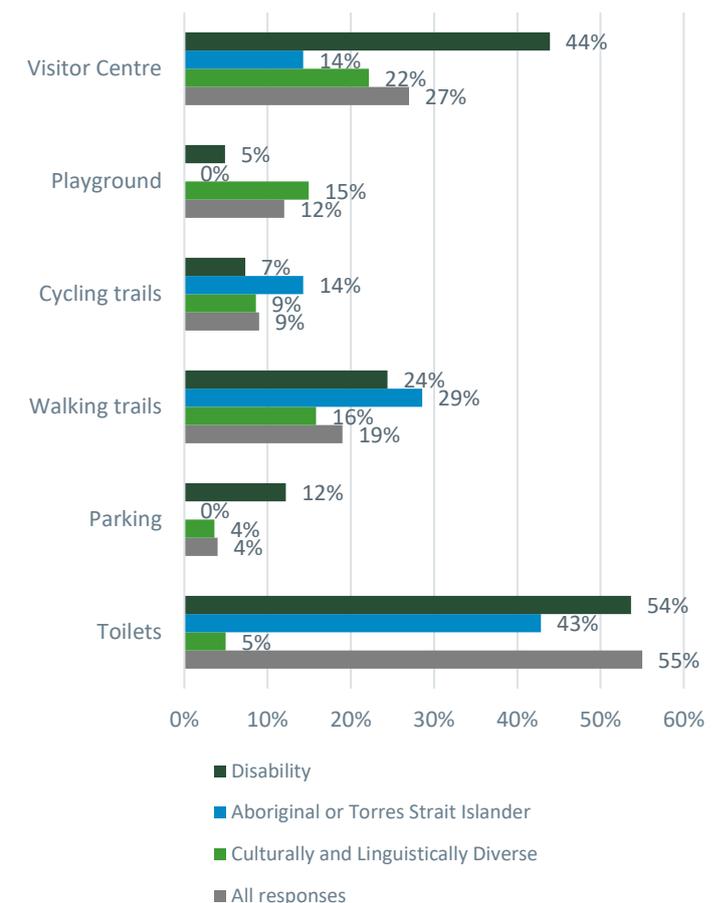
Other facility improvements recommended by the community include improved signage, better maintenance of bird hides, more diverse cycling facilities, improved lighting and security. Some survey respondents suggested bins as an additional facility to be added at Braeside Park, however this is not in line with Parks Victoria’s waste management approach in parks.

“Better signage about trails. I often get asked by people wondering where they are and which way they should go” – Survey respondent

“More cycling infrastructure including gravel paths, Mountain Bike tracks and BMX jumps” – Survey response

Further suggestions from stakeholders include improvements to the visitor centre, car park, Parks Victoria office and public toilets.

Responses from the community identified some difference in prioritisation of facility improvements based on the respondent’s cultural background or ability, shown in Figure 11. Improvements to walking and cycling trails were, on average, more highly prioritised by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander respondents. Improved parking facilities, walking trails and seating along trails were more



highly prioritised by respondents with a disability. Improvements to the playground were more highly prioritised by respondents who identified as being Culturally or Linguistically Diverse (CALD).

Resourcing

Concerns were raised regarding the level of resourcing for Braeside Park (36 survey mentions), relating to budget and level of staffing. Concerns related to the perceived flow on impact on maintenance and environmental management of the park.

“The spread of invasive weedy plants and lack of maintenance of the trails/bird hides is noticeable. I would increase the staff/budget to repair and maintain the current infrastructure before considering improvements.”
 – Survey respondent

Future opportunities for Braeside Park

During workshops, stakeholders raised the following ideas as future opportunities in Braeside Park: large events, sporting fields, new trails, new facilities such as seating and fitness equipment, tour operators, café, camping, dog walking, horse agistment and community

changes would make them more or less likely to visit Braeside Park. The suggestions presented to the community were:

- Dogs allowed on-lead in a defined area (e.g. Redgum Picnic Area)
- Food and drink available for purchase
- Bicycles available for hire to ride within Braeside Park
- Organised group camping (e.g. schools, disability groups) allowed in designated areas
- More fitness equipment along walking and running trails
- More seating along walking and running trails
- Public events held in the park (e.g. outdoor cinema, music or food festivals, markets etc)
- Health, wellbeing and social inclusion programs in the park
- Walking trail through Heathland conservation

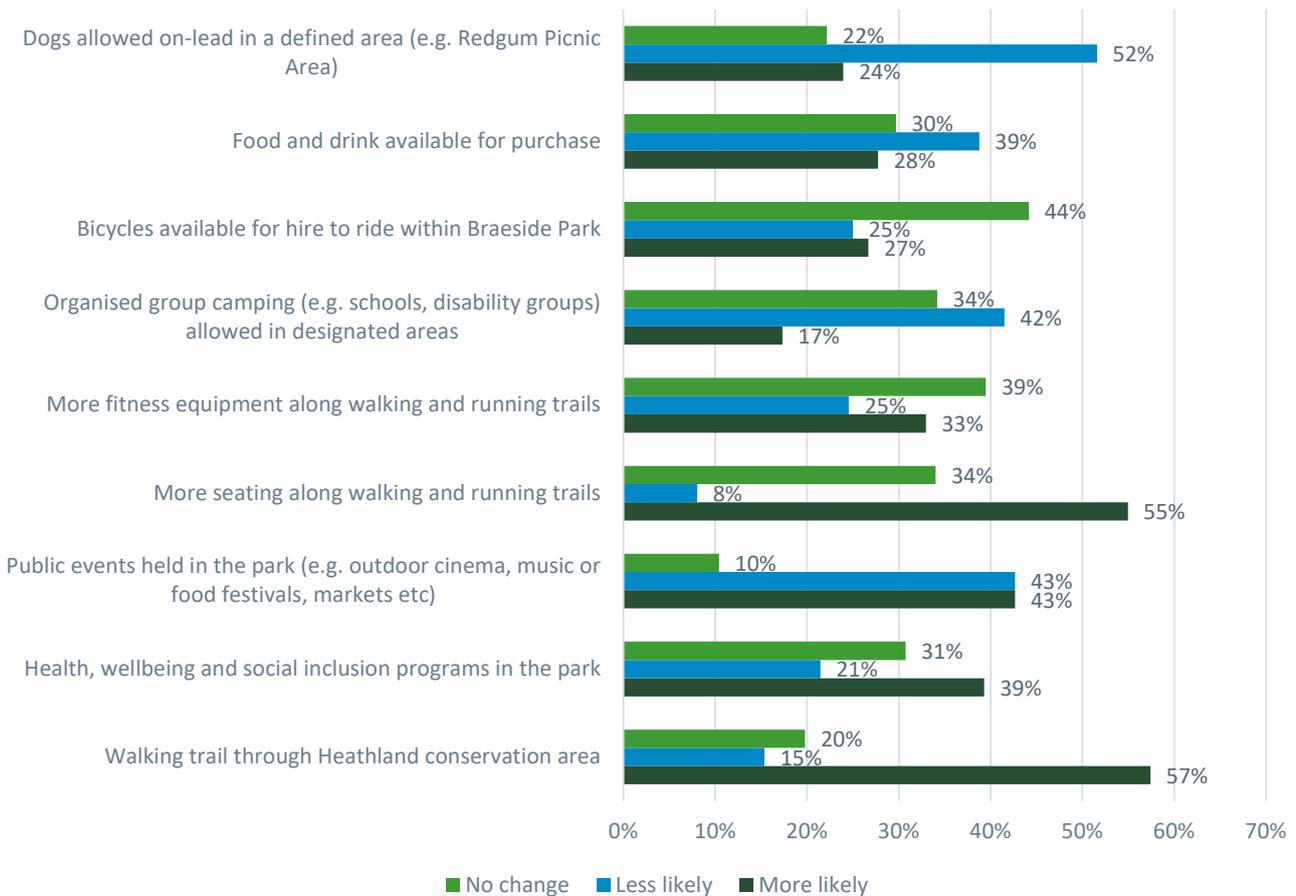


Figure 9: Survey responses to nine proposed opportunities at Braeside Park, demonstrating whether these changes would make the survey respondent more likely, less likely or have no change on their likelihood of visiting Braeside Park.

programs. Parks Victoria added further parameters around these suggestions and asked the community if the

area

Parks Victoria did not seek community feedback via online survey regarding the development of sporting fields or horse agistment within Braeside Park. These activities are not in the scope of Braeside Park’s Planning process and will be considered as part of broader open space planning processes by Government and local council.

Parks Victoria also allowed community to provide ideas for other changes not listed that may increase the likelihood of visiting Braeside Park. These responses were captured as open text and categorised based on similar topics, reported below.

Dogs allowed in Braeside Park

Overall, introducing dog walking would not encourage more people to visit the park and would discourage over half of the survey participants. When asked if allowing dog walking on-lead in a defined area of the park (e.g. Redgum Picnic Area) would impact the likelihood of visiting Braeside Park, 24 per cent of respondents said they would be more likely to visit, 52 per cent said they would be less likely to visit, and 22 per cent said it would cause no change to their likelihood of visiting.

There were no significant differences in age, gender or regularity of current visitation regarding attitude towards dogs being allowed on-lead at Braeside Park. Survey respondents with a disability showed a higher portion of respondents less likely to visit if dogs were allowed.

Figure 12 shows a demographic comparison of attitude towards dog walking at Braeside.

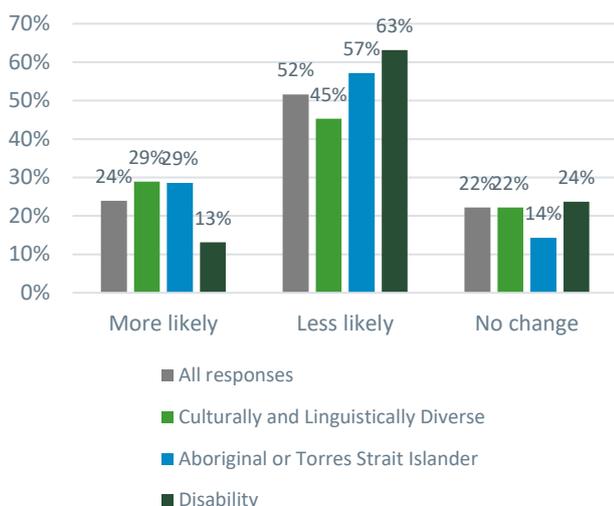


Figure 12: Demographic comparison of attitude towards dogs allowed on-lead in a defined area e.g. Redgum Picnic Area (n. 1,127)

Concerns raised by the community towards allowing dogs at Braeside Park include the potential impact on wildlife,

increased likelihood of litter in the park and concerns for visitor compliance with on-lead regulations. Stakeholders and the community mentioned there is no need for Braeside Park to allow dogs given other dog walking opportunities available in the local area.

“I can’t see how this wouldn’t undermine conservation values” – Survey respondent

“There are already plenty of dog friendly parks and recreation spaces in the broader area - please leave Braeside to the native animals.” – Survey respondent

“The idea of having dogs in designated areas is a good idea in principle. Unfortunately, this is not what happens in practice, people that don’t value environmental values will not stick to their designated areas, and compliance on these kinds of things is difficult to maintain.” – Survey participant

Those in favour of dogs allowed on-lead at Braeside Park (24%) suggested they would visit more often if they were able to bring their dog and would feel safer in the park when accompanied by their dog. Some respondents also suggested it may have indirect benefits on managing invasive species.

“I would visit much more often if dogs were allowed on leash on some trails.” – Survey respondent

“The space is big enough to allow for this and it may help with the rabbit problem.” – Survey respondent

Food and drink available for purchase in Braeside Park

Provision of food and drink for purchase in Braeside Park is not largely supported by the community, with 39% of survey respondents less likely to visit if food and drink was made available to purchase. Primary community concerns towards the introduction of food or drink for purchase include increased litter, overdevelopment and incompatibility of associated infrastructure with the natural surroundings.

“Having food and drinks available for purchase will only increase trash and lazy actions from people; will increase pollution and risk wildlife.” – Survey respondent

Those who were more likely to visit if there was food or drink available for purchase (28%) elaborated that they would be most interested in coffee or items served in an eco-friendly or sustainable manner.

“A small cafe that focused on sustainable cups etc would be incredible” – Survey respondent

“Any development should be done as state of the art environmental friendly and non-intrusive to wildlife. Take the opportunity to lead the way with it.” – Survey respondent

Availability of food or drink to purchase at Braeside Park would have no impact on 30 per cent of survey respondents.

Bicycles available for hire

Availability of bicycles for hire at Braeside Park is not likely to have an impact on the community’s likelihood of visiting Braeside Park. When asked, 44 per cent of survey respondents stated bicycle hire would have no change on their likelihood of visiting. The primary intent of 64 per cent survey respondents is to walk, run or ride within the park. There is also a high prevalence of visitors arriving via their own bicycle (23% of visitors).

Organised group camping

Organised group camping is not largely supported by the community, with 42 per cent of survey respondents stating the introduction of group camping would make them less likely to visit Braeside Park.

“Loved being able to picnic in a 'natural' setting, had a lovely, peaceful afternoon. I seriously hope no-one is planning to destroy it by allowing camping...” – Survey respondent

Some survey respondents elaborated on the potential value group camping may have for school or disadvantaged groups, but would have no bearing on their personal likelihood of visiting Braeside Park.

“[camping] will allow more families in the area to get out camping and enjoying the outdoors who would otherwise not be able to.” – Survey respondent

Fitness equipment

Provision of fitness equipment along walking and running trails within Braeside Park is not likely to increase or decrease visitation. Results of the survey show 40 per cent of respondents stated more fitness equipment would cause no change to their likelihood of visitation. Comments by respondents who would be less likely to visit if more fitness equipment was provided (25%) elaborated on the visual impact of equipment and low use of equipment at other locations.

“[Fitness equipment] so often done badly in public parks and become waste of money ornaments” – Survey respondent

Survey respondents who would be more likely to visit if more fitness equipment was provided (33%) suggest it would add an element for adult interaction around the playground and could incorporate accessible features.

“Adult exercise equipment would be great. Maybe even a liberty swing.” – Survey respondent

More seating

Survey responses suggest increased provision of seating along trails will have a positive impact on visitation. Altogether, 56 per cent of survey respondents suggested this would increase their likelihood of visiting Braeside Park.

“Seats etc are good as they support a calmer, observing and quiet space, needed in this developing area and also access for older people or those with disabilities.” – Survey respondent

Public events

The proposal of public events in Braeside Park (such as outdoor cinemas, music or food festivals, markets etc) was the suggestion that divided participants the most. If public events were provided, 43 per cent of respondents would be more likely to visit Braeside Park, while 43 per cent would be less likely to visit Braeside Park.

A small difference in the median age of respondents was observed when comparing attitudes towards public events, shown in Figure 13. The median age of survey respondents more likely to visit if public events are held is 40-44 years, compared with the median age of 50-54 for respondents less likely to visit if public events are held. No other demographic differences were found comparing attitude towards events.



Figure 13: Age comparison in relation to likelihood of visiting Braeside Park if public events were held (more likely n.467, less likely n. 470)

Among those in favour of public events, general excitement was shared towards the suggestion of new entertainment options. Some respondents in favour of this suggestion added the condition that they would not want to see these activities come at the expense of environmental values of the park.

“While one-off market or festival type events would be great (love the outdoor cinema idea!) I would not like to see drinks and snacks for sale as it would inevitably lead to litter.” – Survey respondent

“Markets and events are an interesting idea, but noise and disturbance to local wildlife needs to be carefully considered and prioritised.” – Survey respondent

Predominant concerns raised by survey respondents not in favour of introducing public events at Braeside Park relate to potential for increased noise, litter and the inappropriateness of such activities with a natural space.

“Markets and cinema can be held anywhere but the peacefulness and beauty of nature is very precious.” – Survey respondent

“I am not confident that large community events can be conducted in the Park without a negative impact on the Park.” – Survey respondent

Health, wellbeing and social inclusion programs

Community support exists for health, wellbeing and social inclusion programs at Braeside Park (40% more likely to visit if health, wellbeing and social inclusion programs provided, 31% no change and 22% less likely).

Survey respondents recognise the value of current community and volunteer programs and advocate for the expansion of existing programs.

“Consider opening up this space [Men’s Shed] to women’s groups, mixed groups or children’s groups” – Survey respondent

New programs suggested by the community include group running, facilitated fitness programs, walking buddies, community fishing programs and art and craft activities.

“It would be great to see more environment focussed and sustainability focussed elements to the park. For example, a kitchen garden program with education opportunities, allotments, kids activities etc.” – Survey respondent

Heathland trail

A new walking trail through the currently closed heathland conservation area is well supported by the community. This suggestion was the most favoured of those put to the community in the online survey, with 58 per cent of respondents being more likely to visit Braeside Park if a trail through the conservation area was created.

Some respondents in favour of opening walking access to the Heathland area suggest this should be done with the lowest environmental impact as possible.

“If a walking trail was to be installed in the heathland, it would be great to include interpretive elements.” – Survey respondent

“[Supportive of] walking through the heathland only if it did not impact any native species” – Survey respondent

“If the heathland is to have a track it should be raised to keep people off it.” – Survey respondent

Those opposed to a walking trail through the heathland expressed concern for compromising the area’s conservation value and opening the area to increased environmental threats.

“Restricted access areas are one of the last remaining strongholds of habitat conservation. Allowing people to trample through the bush would only hinder the parks future, not enable it.” – Survey respondent

“Leaving the heathland the way it is to protect the native wild life.” – Survey respondent

Other future opportunities raise by the community

In addition to the ideas discussed above, the community raised additional changes that would make them more likely to visit Braeside Park. The following additional ideas were mentioned:

- Lighting and security measures to improve visitor safety
- Better promotion of existing activities
- More educational opportunities to learn about the park
- More diverse offer for children
- More prominent signage on road entrances
- Better wayfinding to orientate visitors within the park
- More toilet and drinking facilities

Please don’t change Braeside Park, prioritise nature

A high level of appreciation was shared for Braeside Park in its current state. Stakeholders and community readily commented on its natural beauty and ecological value, and the benefit this brings to their personal health and wellbeing.

A large number of comments were received through open text response that ask for no change to the park, or to prioritise nature over visitor facilities in future planning. In the survey, 23 per cent of all respondents made mention in favour of no change to the park and 5 per cent stated a preference for natural values to be prioritised over new initiatives.

“Keep it as an oasis. No more buildings or infrastructure chipping away at the park.” – Survey respondent

“I don't want to see any activities that can impact negatively on our irreplaceable wildlife especially dogs and large number of peoples which do have a negative impact. – Survey respondent

“The park as it is now strikes the right balance of accessibility and conservation of the environment. I would not like to see more commercialisation, and not in favour of allowing dogs to the park.” – Survey respondent

6. Next steps

Parks Victoria will create a broad plan for Braeside Park. This plan will be based on stakeholder and community feedback, Parks Victoria's strategic direction and broader Government priorities to ensure Braeside Park continues to provide benefit to the Victorian community while conserving biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Parks Victoria is developing a Plan for Braeside Park to ensure the park remains relevant and can achieve its primary goal of providing diverse recreational and educational experiences for the metropolitan community, which are compatible with protection and enhancement of the park's ecological and cultural values.

Stakeholder and community feedback detailed in this report will help inform key decisions in the planning process. Parks Victoria will also consider Braeside Park's contribution to broader Victorian strategies and City of Kingston strategic documents and priorities, such as the Sandbelt Chain of Parks.

A draft Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan will be available for public comment prior to finalisation. Once complete, the Plan will guide short to medium term (5-10 years) management decisions for the park to achieve the directions set by the Plan. While a Braeside Park Visitor Experience Plan is an important planning tool to guide future decisions within Braeside Park, there is no obligation or commitment from Parks Victoria to deliver each of the initiatives detailed in a Plan within a specific timeframe.

This report is a summary of stakeholder input and community feedback. There is no current commitment to implement (or not implement) the opportunities detailed in this report. Further work including budget proposals, cultural heritage and environmental assessments need to be undertaken before any commitments can be made.

For further information about Braeside Park and the current opportunities available, please visit www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/braeside-park.





- 7. Appendix:
- 8. Workshop handout

10 Things Special about Braeside Park

1		Special
2		Special
3		Special
4		Special
5		Special
6		Special
7		Special
8		Special
9		Special
10		Special

5 Little Known Gems in Braeside Park (what do you know that nobody else knows)

1		Gems
2		Gems
3		Gems
4		Gems
5		Gems

10 Key Issues to Address at Braeside Park

1		Issues
2		Issues
3		Issues
4		Issues
5		Issues
6		Issues
7		Issues
8		Issues
9		Issues
10		Issues

Existing Programs/Activities that Connect People to Braeside Park

1		Existing Progs
2		Existing Progs
3		Existing Progs
4		Existing Progs
5		Existing Progs
6		Existing Progs
7		Existing Progs
8		Existing Progs
9		Existing Progs
10		Existing Progs

10 Things you would like to see Shape the Future for Braeside Park

1		Future
2		Future
3		Future
4		Future
5		Future
6		Future
7		Future
8		Future
9		Future
10		Future

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