



St Leonards Local Port Area Plan

Community Engagement Summary Report

August 2024

Wadawurrung Acknowledgement

We deeply respect our people of the past. Our Elders, children, men and women.

We deeply respect their knowledge of Country, Waters and Sky.

We thank them for their resilience and strength, and for never ceding sovereignty.

We carry and stand with our Ancestors Spirit.

Parks Victoria Acknowledgement

Wadawurrung's Cultural Landscape reflects how Wadawurrung people engage with their world and experience their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns.

The landscapes we see today are influenced by the skills, knowledge, and activities of Wadawurrung peoples, past and present. Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to and ongoing role in caring for Country.

St Leonards is on Wadawurrung Country, and Parks Victoria is in continual consultation with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation in the development of the local port area plan as members of the project reference group.

This publication may be of assistance to you but Parks Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Authorised and published by Parks Victoria
Level 10, 535 Bourke St, Melbourne

Cover image: St Leonards Pier and surrounding waters Credit: Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

Contents

Executive Summary..... 4

Introduction..... 5

Consultation approach 6

Summary of findings 8

Next steps..... 16

Executive Summary

Parks Victoria is developing a plan to guide the future use and management of the St Leonards local port area. The plan will set out the priorities to ensure St Leonards Pier continues to be a safe and thriving recreational activity destination for the Bellarine Peninsula. Focusing on the 'on-water' aspects and use, the plan aims to guide a funded rebuild of St Leonards Pier and provide direction for the future use and management of the harbour, including swing moorings. The plan is being developed with consideration of current and future demand and uses.

Recognising the importance of this plan to the community, people who live, work, or visit the area were invited to participate in a consultation process to ensure a plan that reflects local experiences. Community consultation was held to inform the community of the project and was important in seeking feedback on the Draft St Leonards Local Port Area Plan. Given the significant community interest, the consultation period was extended by three weeks to allow more locals to have their say. Consultation was open between 9 March and 27 April 2024.

All feedback summarised in this report has been carefully reviewed and is being used to update the designs along with further detailed investigations into the area's maritime heritage, cultural and environmental values.

Participation

The consultation process attracted high levels of participation.

- The Engage Victoria page was viewed by 5,464 people
- 779 submissions made through the online survey
- 791 total submissions including 12 email submissions sent to engage@parks.vic.gov.au

Demographic data from survey participants showed:

- Predominantly local residents
- More male than female participants
- A higher representation of people aged 35 and over.

Key feedback

Participants expressed a strong value for the existing character and location of St Leonards Pier. There was strong support to either maintain or extend the pier's current length.

Feedback on the proposed pier concept options was generally negative. Neither Option 1 nor Option 2 was strongly supported, however, Option 1 was slightly favoured due to its alignment to preserving the current pier's values.

Participants told us that the pier is highly valued as a recreational location for activities such as walking, swimming, fishing, scuba diving, and snorkelling. We also heard that the pier plays an important role for boating which contributes to the St Leonards township character.

Participants placed a high priority on environmental protection, expressing concerns about potential impacts on the marine environment from demolishing and rebuilding the pier.

Introduction

The St Leonards Local Port Area Plan will set out the priorities, key values, themes, and opportunities to provide direction for the future use and management of the pier and local port area.

Key stakeholder discussions and technical, environmental, and heritage studies were conducted in 2023 to help shape a draft plan.

The draft plan was shared for broader community input and feedback between March and April 2024 to help shape the development of the revised plan.

About this report

A local port area plan is the output of the process of planning and prioritising future work in a maritime precinct. It provides the mechanism to engage with local communities and stakeholders to determine how they currently use their local ports and what they may require in the future.

The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings from the 2024 community consultation on the draft St Leonards Local Port Area Plan.

This report was prepared by Parks Victoria. All feedback and ideas presented in this report were collected during consultation activities. All input has been given equal consideration and has not been weighted or adjusted. The findings in this report reflect the views of participants. Findings have not been edited for accuracy and do not necessarily reflect the views of Parks Victoria.

Reading this report – limitations

As with all consultation processes and reporting analysis, some considerations should be acknowledged when reading the report.

People who participated in the consultation process self-selected to take part. Therefore, the feedback in this report does not necessarily reflect the views of a representative sample of the community. Some participants chose to provide feedback via submission, without demographic details. Therefore, demographic details are not available for all participants.

The graphs and figures in this report are generated from the quantitative survey questions only.

Consultation approach

A consultation strategy was developed by Parks Victoria that outlined the purpose and ways people could provide input into the draft local port area plan.

The primary purpose of this stage of the consultation was to collect feedback on the layout of the local port and two concept options for a new St Leonards Pier.

Public consultation took place between 9 March and 27 April 2024.

Objectives

The objectives for this stage of engagement were:

- to engage with stakeholders and community to understand their values and challenges within the project scope, including:
 - the future layout of a rebuilt St Leonards Pier and associated structures
 - a functional on-water layout that enhances activity, movement, and recreational use and considers impacts on the swing moorings, dredging fairways, and berthing
 - opportunities for visitor berthing
- to help develop a final St Leonards Local Port Area Plan.

Ways to participate

Participants could learn about the draft plan and provide feedback online by visiting the project web page and Engage Victoria webpage, completing a survey on the Engage Victoria platform, via email to engage@parks.vic.gov.au, or via direct discussions with Parks Victoria staff.

Promotion

Consultation was promoted via:

- emails sent to people who had subscribed for updates and interested stakeholders
- Parks Victoria media releases
- posters installed on St Leonards Pier and displayed at St Leonards General Store
- postcard distribution (500) to St Leonards residents
- face-to-face promotion in St Leonards on the weekend before the launch of engagement. Parks Victoria staff spoke with around 60 attendees at a public market stall on Saturday 9 March 2024 as part of the St Leonards community market at Harvey Park
- direct calls to key stakeholders including government agencies, licensed tour operators, mooring holders, and other stakeholders.

Participation

There were high levels of participation in the consultation process. The Engage Victoria page had 14,187 views from 5,464 individuals, with 779 people providing feedback through an online survey.

Altogether, 791 people provided feedback on the draft plan in the following ways:



779 online surveys on Engage Victoria.



12 email submissions sent to engage@parks.vic.gov.au

Demographic insights

Participants who completed the online survey had the option to provide demographic information about themselves. Of the participants who provided demographic information:

- More than half of the participants (56%) were male, (35%) were female, (2%) self-described, and (7%) preferred not to say.
- The majority of participants (73%) were aged 35 years and over, including (29%) between 35 and 49 years, (22%) between 50 and 59 years, and (22%) between 60 and 69 years.
- Participants came from across Victoria. As expected, the majority (65%) were residents of St Leonards, providing their residential postcode as 3223.



Photo 1: Aerial view of the St Leonards Pier and curved eastern arm

Summary of findings

The analysis below is based on online survey responses

Valued components in designing a new pier

Participants told us they value the existing character of the pier and would like the pier to remain in its current location. Many comments requested the pier be kept the same length or made longer than the two options presented (both pier options indicated a shorter length pier than the current length). Participants expressed concern that a shorter pier would not adequately support current or future uses.

Participants expressed that the pier is valued as a recreational location for activities such as walking, swimming, fishing, scuba diving, and snorkelling. They also said the pier is an important facility for boating and this boating function serves as an important element of the St Leonards township character. Comments from survey participants included:

- *“maintain the old pier”*
- *“it is critical to uphold the iconic design integrity of the current pier while enhancing its functionality”*
- *“retain Sirens Kiosk I visit regularly for coffee”*



Photo

2: Sirens Kiosk at St Leonards Pier - managed by Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management

Environment and conservation

Participants told us they place a high value on protecting the natural marine environment and wanted to ensure potential impacts are carefully considered. Numerous concerns were raised about environmental disturbance and impacts on marine life as a result of the pier demolition and rebuild.

- *“keep the pier as natural as is ... with all the work planned, I wonder if the wildlife (marine creatures as well as the birds and animals) will move away”*

Other comments received

Some participants provided feedback on the value of St Leonards local port area as a safe harbour for boating. They noted that the waters and rock breakwater provide refuge from strong winds, supporting the safety of swimmers, scuba divers, and snorkellers due to its proximity to the western side of Port Phillip.

Several participants sought to support the retention of the mooring locations as they identified as mooring holders. Others valued the aesthetic qualities moored boats provide for the sightseer.

Connection to the local port area

Responses showed that most survey participants were residents of St Leonards.

Some respondents use the pier’s boating and mooring facilities, while others, such as the Traditional Owners responded that they are interested in Sea Country. Participants that responded as Other, were associated with local businesses, and recreational users for fishing, scuba diving, and snorkelling.

What is your connection to St Leonards Pier and the local port area?

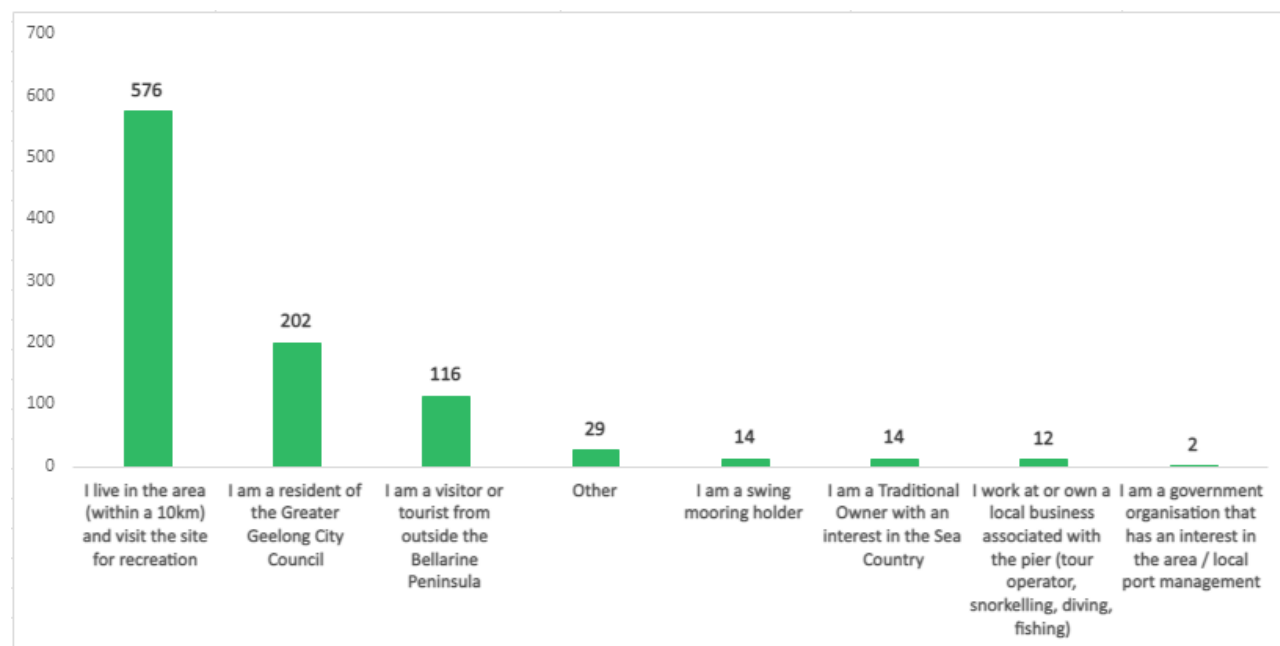


Figure 2: Connection of participants to St Leonards Pier and the local port area (779 participants)

What activities do you do at St Leonards Pier and the local port area?

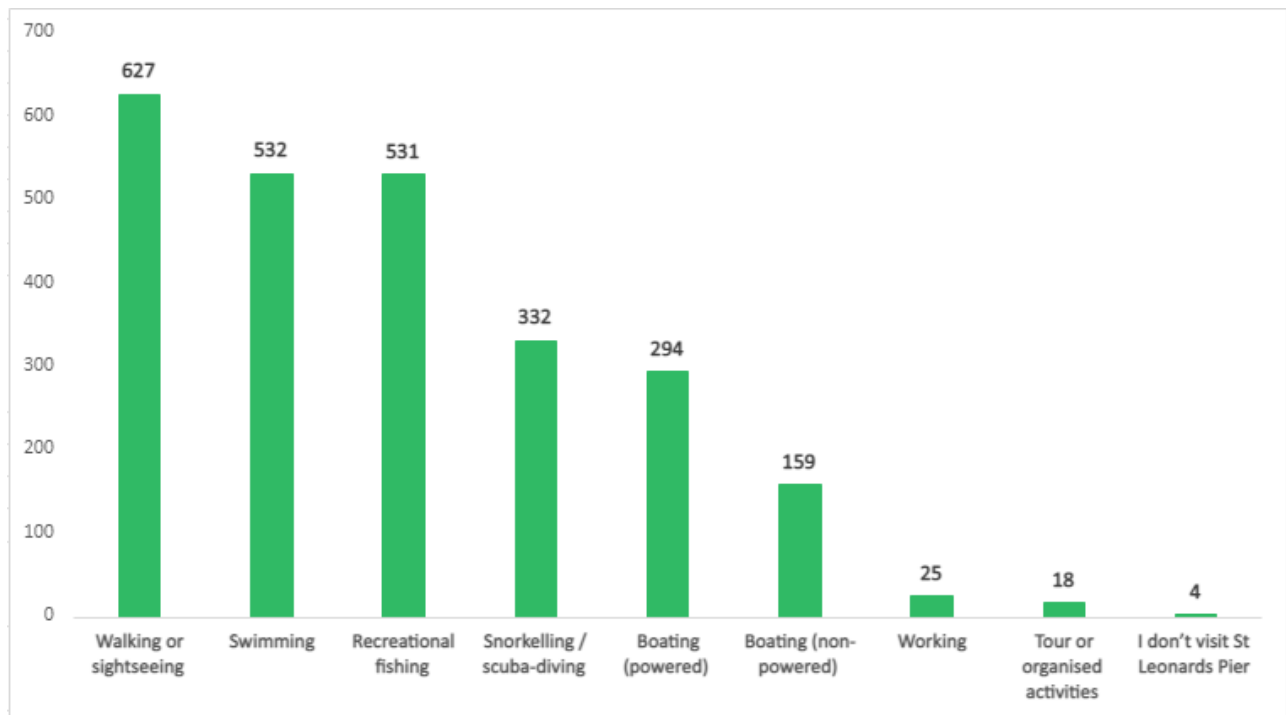


Figure 3 Popular activities at St Leonards Pier and the local port waters (779 participants) were recorded

Participants could select as many activities as required in this question.

Feedback shows recreational activities like walking, sightseeing, swimming, and recreational fishing were the most popular activities among respondents. Boating and snorkelling/scuba-diving were also popular activities. Participants were able to choose multiple options, indicating the various ways the pier and local port area are valued.

In addition to the above responses, participants were given the opportunity to provide suggestions to improve the pier. In the open text fields, people said that recreational fishing, walking, and visiting Sirens Kiosk are highly valued pier experiences. People also noted that a shorter pier was a major concern with several comments that the best fishing is beyond the rock breakwater.

Thinking about the pier and surrounding waters, tell us what aspects are most important to you in creating a better maritime facility at St Leonards.

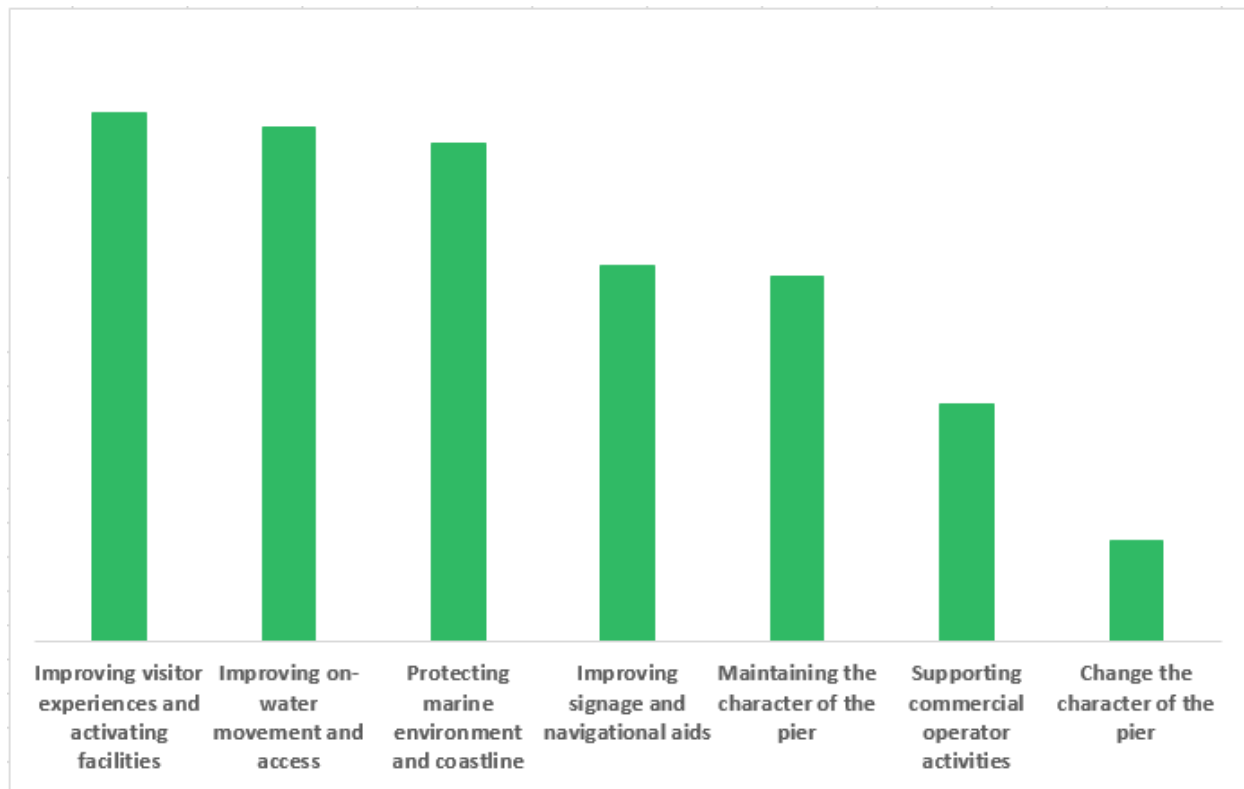


Figure 4 Participants ranked the most important aspects of creating a better maritime facility at St Leonards on a scale from 5 (most important) to 1 (least important)

This question aimed to understand what people envision for the local port in the future. Participants were asked to rank the aspects most important to them from 5 (most important) to 1 (least important). The most popular responses included improving visitor experience, improving on-water access, and protecting the marine environment and coastline. Additionally, improving signage and navigational aids emerged as important themes. Maintaining the character of the pier closely followed as the fifth most popular choice.



Photo 3: St Leonards Pier low landing for boating and recreational activities

Feedback on the two concept options

The draft plan proposed (presented) two concept options for a new St Leonards Pier. Survey participants were invited to provide feedback on these options.

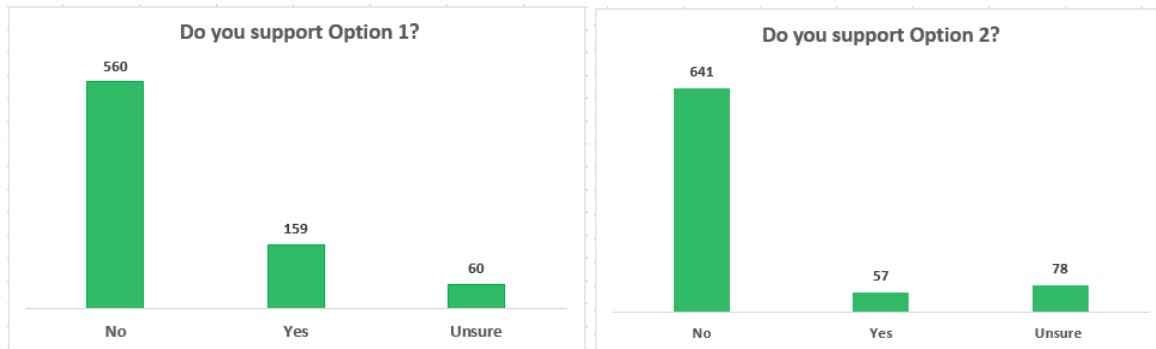


Figure 5: Participants support for the two concept options (from 779 participants)

Participants largely told us they did not support either Option 1 or Option 2. Of the two options, participants told us that Option 1 was favoured for its potential to preserve the current alignment and values. Comments included:

- *“make it longer and follow the current L shape”*
- *“we need Option 3 ... St Leonards redevelopment is welcomed but should preserve its character. Safety and diverse activities are vital. Ensure public access and consider permanent berths/moorings for a balance harbour”*
- *“increase the length of the pier for both fishing and walking, and provide low landing for scuba diving and snorkelling access”*

Feedback on Pier Concept Option 1

When asked about support for pier concept Option 1, the majority of participants (560) did not support it, 159 supported it, and 60 were unsure. See Figure 5.

Comments provided by survey respondents around Option 1 included:

- *“extending the pier to its former glory along the rock wall”*
- *“Longer pier we are being short changed”*
- *“Moving the alignment will destroy the reef and grass bed areas that hold fish and squid life”*
- *“(the) pier needs to retain current characteristics but with some enhancement”*
- *“I like the design with separate boating and scuba/snorkelling areas, but the pier needs to extend for fishing over the breakwater”*

Participants were asked to rank the key features proposed in Option 1 in order of what is most important to them.

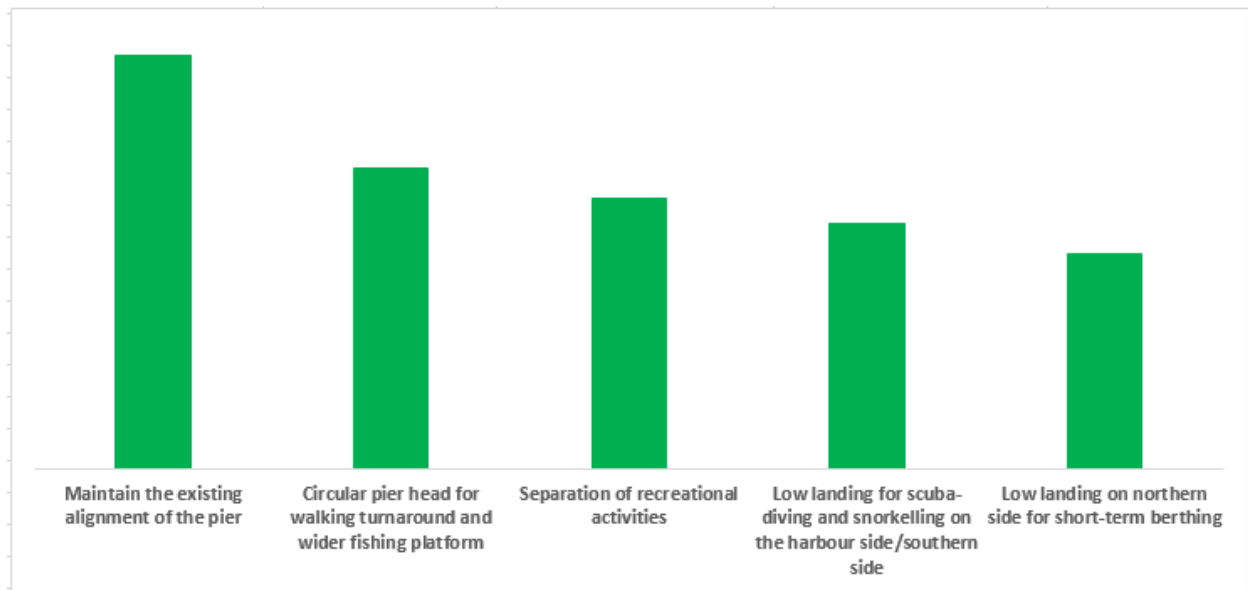


Figure 6: Participants ranked the key features of Option 1 on a scale from 5 (most important) to 1 (least important)

In ranking the key features of Option 1, participants placed the highest value on maintaining the existing pier alignment. Followed by the circular pier head, this was clarified with comments in the 'open text' asking how could this option be improved. The third highest ranking was to separate recreational activities (in particular fishing and snorkelling/swimming). Comments received included:

- "Maintain the old pier"
- "the structure should be lengthened with the circular platform to extend beyond the breakwater as a fishing platform"

Feedback on Pier Concept Option 2

When asked about support for pier concept Option 2, the majority of participants (641) were not in support, 78 were unsure and 57 supported. See Figure 5 on page 11.

Additional comments included concerns around possible environmental impacts and a desire to leave the pier footprint 'as-is'.

- "Extending the pier ... as there's more than enough room for boat and tour operators"
- "The pier redevelopment is welcomed but should preserve its character. Safety and diverse activities are vital. Ensure public access and consider permanent berths/moorings for a balanced harbor"
- "Use Option 1. Extend the pier to connect with the rock wall and return to east."

Participants were asked to rank the key features in option 2 in order of what is most important to them.

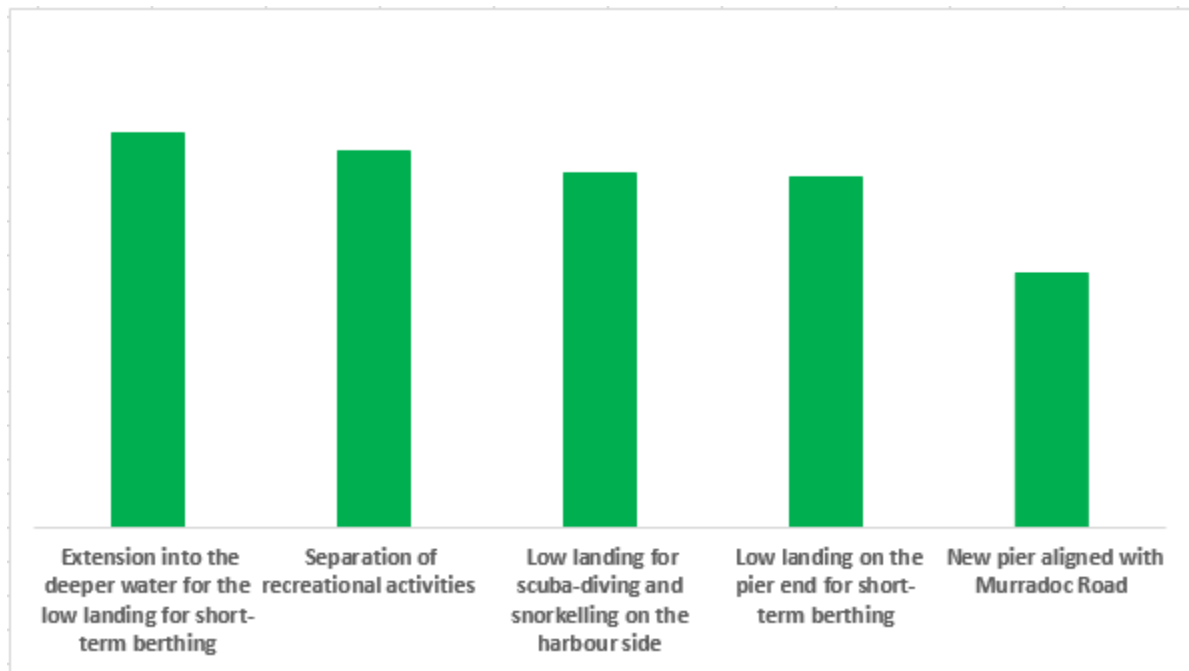


Figure 7: Participants ranked the key features of Option 2 on a scale from 5 (most important) to 1 (least important)

In ranking the key features of Option 2, participants placed near equal importance on four of the five listed features:

- Highest ranked response on extending the pier into deeper water for short-term berthing,
- Second highest-ranked response on the separation of recreational activities,
- Third highest-ranked response on the low landing for berthing at the end of the pier
- Fourth highest-ranked response on the low landing for scuba-diving and snorkelling on the harbour side.

The key feature that received the least interest was to build a new pier along the alignment with Murradoc Road.

Other feedback

Below is a selection of general comments provided by survey respondents on the draft plan.

- *"I do not want to support a shorter pier at St Leonards"*
- *"keep the swing moorings we are used to seeing boats in the harbor"*
- *"retain the F design of the pier this has worked well for the last however many years"*
- *"keeping the original pier, updating the pier with stronger structural materials. Expanding the area of the pier"*
- *"I like the design that separate boating and scuba/snorkelling areas"*
- *"make safer with safety rails and a lot of signage"*
- *"as a wildlife rescue volunteer I have had to perform rescues, primarily birds with fishing tackle entanglement"*



Photo 4: St Leonards Pier southern concrete arm and eastern finger jetty

Next steps

All feedback summarised in this report has been read and considered by Parks Victoria.

Parks Victoria will conduct further assessments into the area's maritime heritage and cultural and environmental values to assess further design options that meet the needs of stakeholders and the community.

Parks Victoria thanks everyone who has contributed their ideas and feedback in this phase of engagement. A revised plan will be shared with the community and key stakeholders in the coming months before moving forward with a pier rebuild project that works for the community.



Photo 5: St Leonards local port area

Parks Victoria

Level 10, 535 Bourke St, Melbourne VIC 3000

parks.vic.gov.au

13 1963