



R.G.C COOK RECREATION RESERVE

Landscape Improvement Plan Engagement Summary

**Phase 1 Community Consultation
16 February – 16 March 2026**

Introduction

The City of Whittlesea is developing a draft Landscape Improvement Plan for R.G.C. Cook Recreation Reserve in Thomastown, one of Council's established open space areas. The reserve covers approximately 6.4 hectares and includes two soccer fields, a pavilion with changerooms and public toilets, a playground, walking trails, car parking, and open grassed areas. These features make the reserve suitable for both formal sporting activities and informal recreation for the local community. The Landscape Improvement Plan aims to:

- **improve park facilities** such as the play space, picnic area, fitness station and walking tracks to ensure the safety and accessibility of all users, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities
- **enhance the character of the park** to create a visually appealing environment for residents and visitors
- **creating opportunities to connect** such as walking paths and leisure areas to promote healthy lifestyle and community interaction
- **enhancement of play experience** by improving the quality and variety of play experiences offered at the park by introducing new and innovative play equipment, features, and layouts.

Feedback captured through the community engagement program will inform the R.G.C Cook Recreation Improvement plan. The community engagement will be undertaken in two phases:

- **Phase one**, Information Gathering – 16 February to 16 March 2026 **Completed**
- **Phase two**, Draft Master Plan Exhibition – Scheduled for June 2026

How we engaged you

Council's community engagement approach to support the development of the RGC Cook Recreation Reserve Landscape Improvement Plan consists of two phases. This report focuses on the first phase of community engagement undertaken between 16 February and 16 March 2026.

This phase aimed to engage with the local community to identify the key issues, challenges and opportunities associated with the site, as well as capture any ideas for improvement. To achieve this, we asked community members how they feel about the reserve, what they value, and what suggestion/s they had to enhance the area.

Community feedback was sought online through Council's *Engage Whittlesea* platform and through direct conversation and activities at two community-based pop-up stalls in Thomastown.

The *Engage Whittlesea* platform utilises an accessibility add-on which allows users to easily switch to screen reader mode and adjust settings such as font size, colour contrast, and dyslexia friendly options, and enhancing overall site accessibility. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to mitigate language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top fifteen languages spoken within the municipality. A QR code was included on all project collateral, directing the community to the project page as well as a URL for those unable to scan QR code.

Residents within 500m of the reserve, received a letter to introduce the project and inviting them to share their feedback through the project *Engage Whittlesea* page or in-person at one of the community-based pop-ups.

In-person community engagement

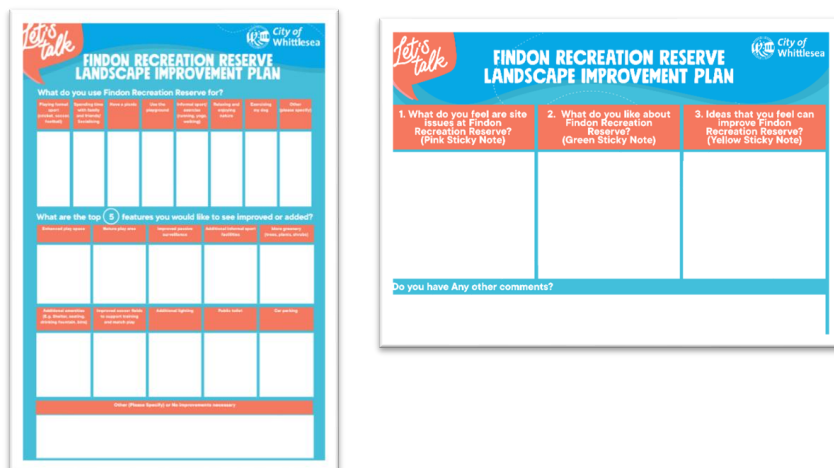
Council hosted two community-based pop-up stalls in Thomastown during this phase of consultation, as below:

- R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve (near playground), Tuesday 10 March, 4:30-6.30pm
- Whittlesea Gardens, Thursday 12 March, 3:30pm-5.30pm



Above: R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve pop-ups located near the reserve

The in-person consultation activities enabled deeper discussion with project team members, with an opportunity to add additional suggestions. Activities presented at the community- based pop-up stalls mirrored the online engagement activities, with community able to participate in the two dot board activities seeking information on how community use the reserve, their top five features for improvement at the reserve and what they like, don't like and any ideas to improve the reserve.



Above: Dot boards used at Community based pop-up for RGC Cook Recreation Reserve Improvement Plan consultation

Online community engagement

On the project's Engage page, community were invited to participate in two engagement activities.

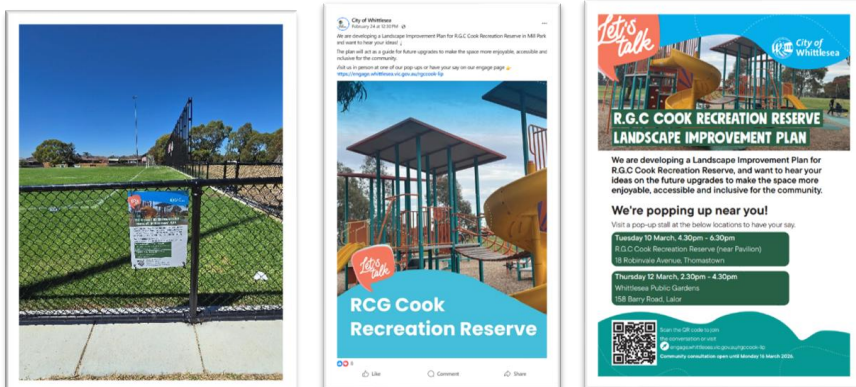
The first activity involved dropping a pin on a map of the reserve and sharing what they like, any issues they have, and sharing ideas for improvement.

The second activity was a survey to determine the current use of the reserve, how community travel to the reserve, any site issues, and top priorities for improvement. The survey questions were designed to help Council understand what is most important to the community when creating the draft landscape improvement plan for R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve. See Appendix 1 for survey questions.

Project promotion

The opportunity to participate in the community engagement was promoted through a range of channels to have a widespread reach across the municipality including:

- Council's digital engagement platform [Engage Whittlesea](#)
- social media – we shared two posts across Council's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram)
- letterbox drop to residents within 500m of the site advising them of the project and inviting them to share their feedback through the project [Engage Whittlesea](#) page or by visiting one of the community-based pop-ups
- consultation details shared with community groups that utilise the reserve
- three large corflute signs installed at the reserve
- flyers and posters displayed at:
 - RGC Cook Recreation Reserve Pavilion
 - Barry Road Neighbourhood House
 - Thomastown library
- media articles
 - [Have your say on reserve upgrades | Northern](#)



Above: Facebook R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve social post, large corflute signage, and flyer promoting the consultation

Participation

The project engage page was viewed 207 times, with a total of 16 community members participating in the first phase of community engagement to develop the R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve Landscape Improvement Plan. Participants were given the opportunity to contribute in two ways; six attended in person at community-based pop-ups and ten people contributed online via the *Engage Whittlesea* platform including the interactive map activity and online survey.

A snapshot of community participation and social interaction

Gender Identity



A total of 44% identified as female, 50% as male and 6% preferred not to say

Age



The most represented age bracket was 35-44 years (31%), followed by 55-64 years of age (19%).

Suburb



A total of 56% of participants resided in Thomastown, followed by Lalor residents (19%)

LGBTQIA+ Community



A total of 13% of participants identified as a member of LGBTQIA+ community

People with Disabilities



A total of 6% of participants identified as a person with a disability, unpaid carer of an older person or unpaid carer of a person with a disability

First peoples



A total of 19% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Digital Engagement



207 views of the project Engage page with 10 people participating in the online survey and social map, two followers subscribed for project updates.

In person Engagement



6 people participated at one of two community-based pop-up stalls in Thomastown.

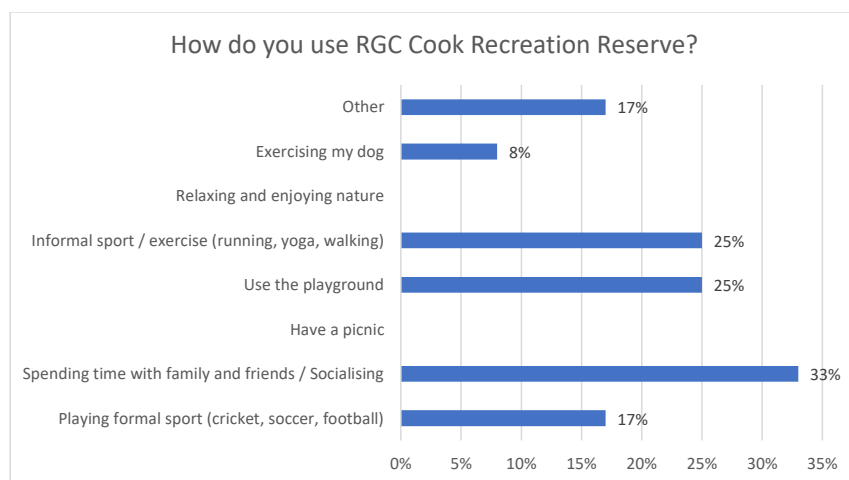
Socials Engagement



Two social media posts with 3617 views and 13 link clicks, generating 10% of traffic to the online Engage page.

What we heard

Participants were asked **how they use RGC Cook Recreation Reserve?** A total of 33% use the area to catch up with friends and family, while equally 25% use the reserve to take their children to the playground or to play informal sports or do exercise. A further 17% of participants play formal sport (cricket, soccer, football) and 8% use the reserve to walk their dog. Below is the full breakdown of what community use RGC Cook Recreation Reserve for.



Above: Breakdown of what in-person and online community use RGC Cook Recreation Reserve for

When asked to **choose their top priorities for improving** RGC Cook Recreation Reserve participants told us that their top five features for improvement are:

1. **Additional amenities such as a shelter and additional seating areas (42%)**
2. **Public toilet (33%) More greenery (33%) Additional informal sports facilities (33%)**
3. **Enhance play space (25%).**

Below is the breakdown of priorities for improvement at RGC Cook Recreation Reserve that were shared during the community engagement.

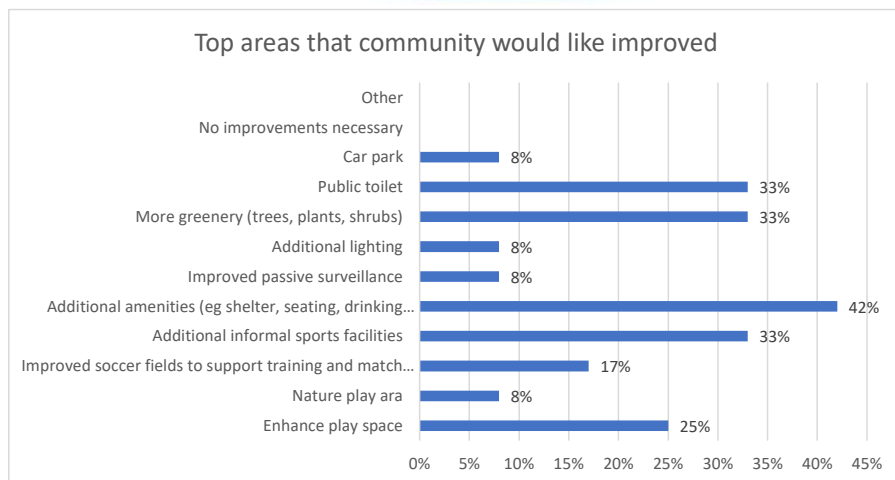


Figure 6: Breakdown of community improvement priorities for RGC Recreation Reserve for

Regular users of *RGC Recreation Reserve* shared their feedback via the online survey, social pinpoint map activity and in-person conversations with Council Officers on:

- *things they value/like about the reserve*
- *issues that they feel need to be addressed at the reserve*
- *what would make them visit the reserve more.*

All community comments received through the consultation (survey, social pinpoint map and in-person conversations) have been themed. Please note that while not all comments captured are featured in this report, all comments will be considered by Council when drafting the R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve Landscape Improvement Plan.

All community members who completed an online survey have visited *RGC Cook Recreation Reserve*. When asked how often they visited the reserve they indicated:

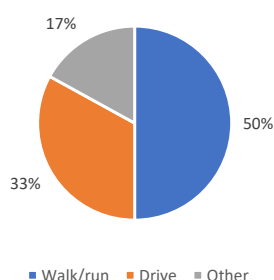
- they visit the park daily or two to three times a week (33%)
- rarely visit the reserve (33%)
- visit the reserve once a month and visit for interschools competitions (33%).

Half of all participants indicated that they usually drive to the reserve, while 33% get to the reserve on foot while the remaining 17% travel to the reserve by school bus when they have interschool sports competitions. See graphs below for full breakdown of figures.

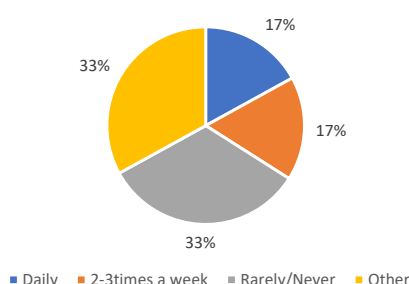
Commented [AN1]: Is this related only to the online survey, or does it include both the online and in-person surveys?

Commented [NS2R1]: [@Alice Nazem](#) online only, we didn't ask these questions in person.

How do you usually get to RGC Cook Reserve?

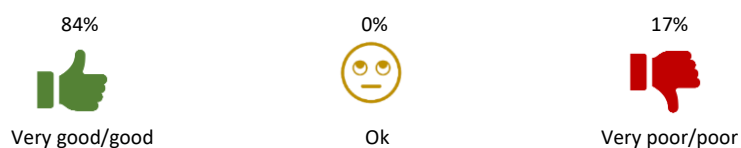


How often do you visit RGC Cook reserve?



Above: Graphs showing how often participants visit RGC Cook Recreation Reserve and how they access it.

Online participants were asked to rate RGC Cook Recreation Reserve, indicating if they think the current state of the reserve and facilities are very good, good, ok, poor, or very poor. Over 80% of participants rated the reserve and facilities as very good/good, highlighting the open space and available amenities. The 17% that rated the reserve as poor or very poor highlighted that the reserve needs a better playground.

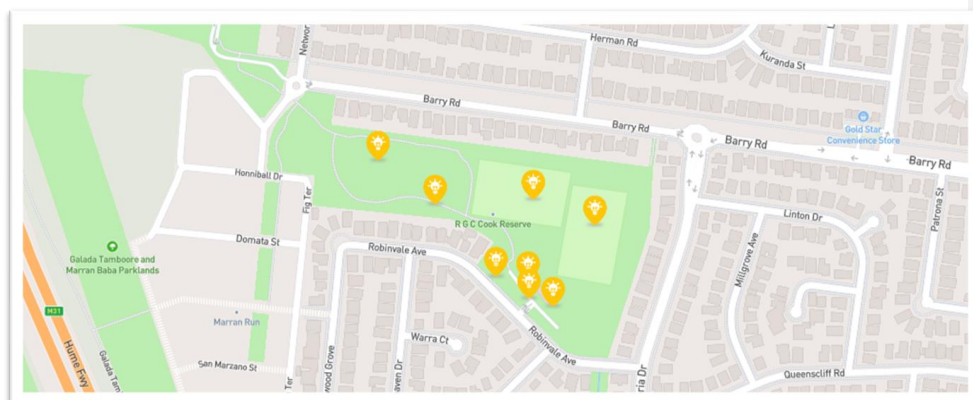


Online interactive map activity results

Four people participated in the digital social map activity below, making eight contributions. Participants added a marker to the map to comment on things they like about the site, any issues, and any ideas for improvement.

Through the activity community highlighted the following concerns and ideas:

- improving facilities at the reserve by adding more seating, shelter, water fountains and bins for family and friend gatherings
- adding additional lighting to improve safety and signage with images to help with language barriers
- widen shared paths to make it more accessible for wheelchair access and bikes
- add more informal sports facilities, such as a basketball court and informal soccer goal area
- a small dog park area with water fountain and seating space.



Above: Shows pins dropped on the interactive online map activity

Key messages from community feedback

Below are the themes captured through the community engagement online and in-person. We've included a selection of verbatim comments to further illustrate community sentiment and ideas.



Enhance play space— community shared they would like the playground upgraded to include a nature play area with water play and sandpit area.

"Kids playground-especially sand pit and water play area as there is no nearby water play area and sand pit"



Informal sports – upgrading the area to include sports and exercise equipment to cater for different interests in the area.

"No point in having 2 footy ovals in the same park! Please change it to a cricket pitch on one side and other side a basketball court with water fountain for users and pets. Also once a cricket pitch is created it needs to advertise with all cricket clubs to use it"

"We want to consider new bushwalking facility, water fountain, basketball/netball court, cricket pitch and footy oval under the same local park as well"



Accessible – upgrading the clubrooms and carpark area to make them DDA approved for all abilities.

"Accessible carpark and walking paths"

"A walking path directed to the park for kids bikes and scooters from Robinvale Ave as the gate is generally locked for the car park if no event is happening"

"Consider upgrading the pedestrian path to a concrete surface and increase the width to make it suitable for shared use between pedestrians and recreational bike riders"



Park maintenance and landscape enhancement – community shared the need for tree canopies to create more shade at the reserve and along the paths.

“Connection required from Whittlesea Gardens to RGC Cook as now a dirt track”



Additional amenities – participants highlighted the need for additional shade, seating areas and drinking fountains to encourage family and friend gatherings at the park, and while watching sporting games.

“Consider installing additional drinking fountains, seats, and bike parking near the rooms as well as around the reserve “

“Please add a water fountain near the entrance to the reserve and a rubbish bin“

Public toilet – the pavilion facilities, including the public toilet are only accessible on training and match days. Community highlighted that these are not signed accordingly and the opening hours do not meet community needs.

“Toilets - need to be signed accordingly as not open to public”

“We need toilets that are open and accessible throughout the entire day for anyone who attends”



“We would very much like to continue playing at the ground, but we would only be able to if there were toilets available for our students”

“Open toilet facilities on non-game/event days”



Safety and lighting – participants would like to see additional lighting, signage and fencing to make users feel safe and help to deter anti-social behaviour.

“Hoon behaviour, is there CCTV in the area? Need to do things to deter vandalism in the area”

“Install lights to go on until 9 pm every day. It will make the park more useful for resident's physical well-being”

“Please put a sign (picture) and English words. It will help people who does not read English”



Dog park and dog related facilities – participants highlighted that dog walkers frequent the reserve and suggested that dogs on lead signage is installed as well as more bins and doggy poo bags to help mitigate the mess that some dog owners are leaving in the reserve.

“Dogs on lead signage”

“Probably wouldn't hurt to have the occasional Ranger/Community Safety officers patrolling to educate the public on keeping dogs on lead”

“Have a small dog park here. Also install water fountain for residents and their pets. Install more seating space here under the dog park enclosure”

Next steps

The information captured through this first phase of community engagement will inform the development of the **draft RGC Cook Recreation Reserve Landscape Improvement plan**. The feedback captured will also help inform the development of other key plans and strategies Council are working on to make *Whittlesea A Place for All*.

Council will endorse the draft master plan for phase two of community engagement, providing the community with an opportunity to see how their feedback has helped shape the master plan and to provide any further feedback.

Thank you again to everyone who participated in phase one of the community engagement by sharing comments, feedback and participating in online activities and community-based pop-up sessions. The community will be updated on further developments via the [R.G.C. Cook Recreation Reserve Landscape Improvement Plan Engage page](#).

Appendix 1: Online survey questions

- *Have you ever been to R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve?*
- *How often do you visit R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve?*
- *How do you usually get to R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve?*
- *How do you use R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve?*

- *What do you like/most value about the reserve?*
- *Do you think there are any issues that need be addressed at the reserve?*
- *What would make you visit the reserve more often?*
- *What are your top 5 features you would like improved or added?*
 - *Enhance play space*
 - *Nature play area*
 - *Improved soccer fields to support training and match play*
 - *Additional informal sports facilities*
 - *Additional amenities (e.g. Shelter, seating area, drinking fountain, bins)*
 - *Improved passive surveillance*
 - *More greenery*
 - *Public toilet*
 - *Car park*
 - *No improvements necessary*
- *How would you rate R.G.C Cook Recreation Reserve overall?*
- *Are there any special events/programs that you would like to see offered at the reserve?*