

Penders Park Master Plan – Engagement Report Phase One & Two

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Introduction

Community advocacy by local residents and users of Penders Park has seen a fresh, new design approach to create a master plan for the park in Thornbury.

A focus of the master plan is an upgrade of the playground to an all abilities play space and accessible toilet facilities.

In March 2018, Council established a community-led Penders Park Project Control Group (PCG) to undertake extensive consultation and lead the development of a master plan.

The PCG are now using the feedback from the consultations to inform the draft master plan, which will be presented to Council for endorsement in November 2018.

Background

Penders Park is a Major Neighbourhood Park that caters for informal recreation needs of the local community such as walking, using the playground, access to picnic/BBQ facilities, parties/gatherings, use of the shelter and toilet facilities. The park is informally used by various other users, including disability services groups, day care centres, exercise groups and off lead dog play.

Penders Park is now due for an upgrade to meet the needs of a growing, diverse and denser population by offering inclusive spaces that can accommodate changing needs and abilities.

Summary of key results

Here is a summary of the key results from the engagement activities:

- Community Petition – 375 signatures
- 300+ community members were consulted with via community events, online activities and targeted discussions.
- 41 community groups and organisations were engaged.
- 561 bits of feedback were captured at the community events.
- 131 people engaged online via the YourSay Darebin site, contributing 169 online comments/ideas/votes.
- 244 informed visitors
- 65% of online participants lived in Thornbury, 24% in Preston (*July/Aug 2018 consultation).
- Community members shared clear messages about the desire for an all abilities play space that is challenging and welcoming to all ages and abilities.
- Support for amenity upgrades to facilities such as the toilets was overwhelming (93% rated upgrades as Very important/Important).
- Locals value the park being an open, safe, green space to connect with nature.

How did we do it?

An overarching description of the key engagement activities and their reach are provided in the table below:

| Activity | Description | Reach |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Community drop-in sessions | Events were held: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 December 2017 - Council led • 21 July 2018 – PCG led | Dec 2017 – 150 attendees (approx.) 189 bits of feedback. July 2018 – 200 attendees (approx.), 372 bits of feedback. |
| Targeted discussions | Key stakeholders were invited via email, phone or in person by a member of the PCG. Groups included, local schools, seniors' groups, disability groups. | 36 discussions, emails, phone calls. |
| Online survey/ideas wall | The YourSayDarebin site hosted the following online engagement activities: Dec 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas wall July/Aug 2018: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey | Visitors to site: 1.2k (Dec 2017 – Aug 2018) Comments on ideas wall: 20 ideas (12 votes) Survey participants: 99 Survey comments: 149 |

Initial community advocacy

On 5 December 2016, a resident petition was tabled with Council, requesting an upgrade to the park into an All-Abilities Major Neighbourhood Park that meets the broader needs of the community. The petition identified that the park was a significant asset to the community, one of few larger parks available for passive and informal recreation, and that it no longer meets the standards and expectations. Council supported the petition and investigation was undertaken.

On 27 February 2017, Council unanimously agreed to upgrade Penders Park, allocating budget for design and planning.

On Saturday 9 December 2017, Council held a drop-in session at Penders Park for community members to provide their ideas about what they would like to see improved. Residents were also invited to register their interest in becoming a member of a community-led PCG to lead the development of the new Penders Park Master Plan.

Council received over 200 comments from the event and via the YourSay Darebin website.

Creation of the Penders Park Project Control Group (PCG)

The Penders Park PCG was established in early 2018 and includes eight local residents, a Ward Councilor and Council Officer that meet fortnightly.

The PCG used feedback from earlier consultations to develop a vision and some key design principles. Throughout July and August 2018, the PCG consulted with the community to ask for feedback on the vision and key design principles.

The community was asked to what extent they agreed with the vision and how important they felt the key design principles were. They were also invited to share any other ideas they had for the park.

Feedback was captured via:

- Community drop-in event – 21 July.
- Online survey.
- Emails and phone calls to key stakeholders.

Who we spoke to

Phase One Consultation (Petition/December 2017)

No specific demographics were collected at the drop in session in December 2017. Approximate attendance observed was 50-70 people over 2 hours.

Phase Two Consultation – July/Aug 2018

A snap shot of demographic data of the online participants is summarised below:

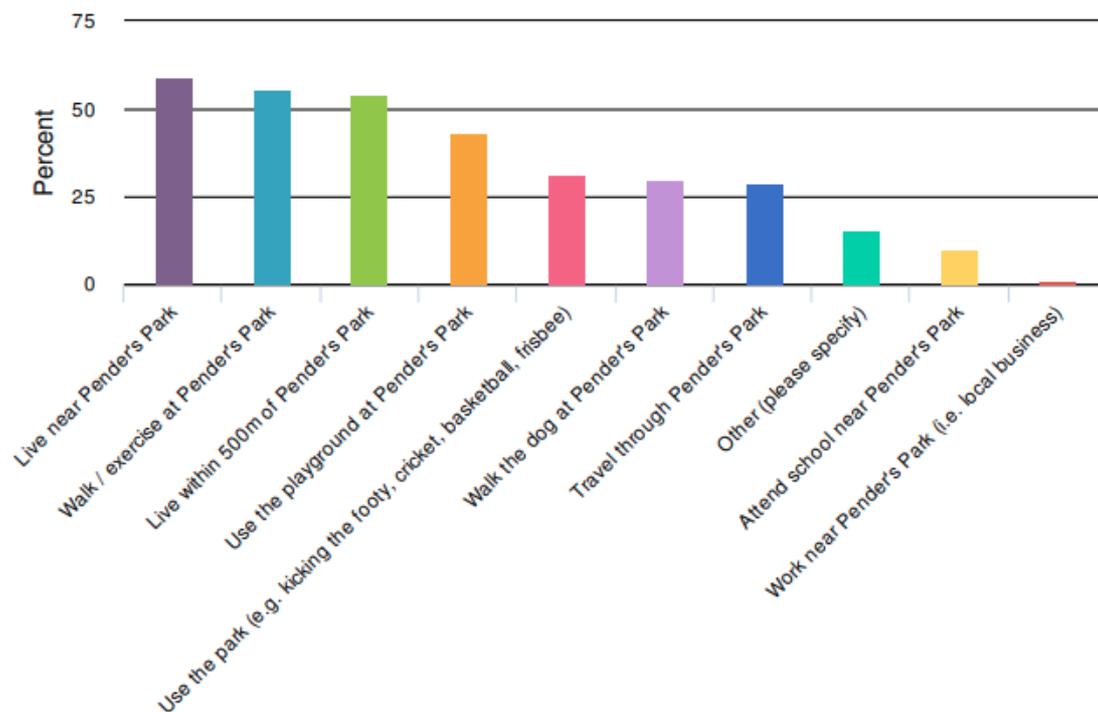
- 38% of online survey participants were aged 35-44 years old.
- 70% were female.
- 65% lived locally in Thornbury, 24% in Preston.
- Over 50% of participants lived within 500 metres of the park.

At the drop-in event we were unable to track the demographics of participants. Observations by the PCG suggest we spoke to a similar demographic that was represented in the online survey. We were able to capture comments from some young people between five and eight years old at the event.

“Today’s response and attendance is a strong indication of how loved Penders is seen. Its communal friendliness and connection with young and old is the answer and value”.

Conversations with local disability groups were also captured and considered.

The chart shows how online survey participants like to use the park:



Community groups & organisations engaged in this process included:

- Arlington Aged Care Facility
- Sapphire Care – Hill Top
- 26 local schools, day care centres and kindergartens
- Uniting Care
- Northcote Scouts
- Darebin Girl Guides
- Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee
- Wurundjeri Land Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Corporation
- Aborigines Advancement League Inc
- Darebin Disability Advisory Committee
- Northern Support Services
- Active and Healthy Ageing Board
- Span Community house
- The Bridge Preston and Thornbury
- St Mary's Elderly Citizens Club
- The Salvation Army
- Crisalida Child, Adolescent, Adult and Family Therapy

Key activities and reach

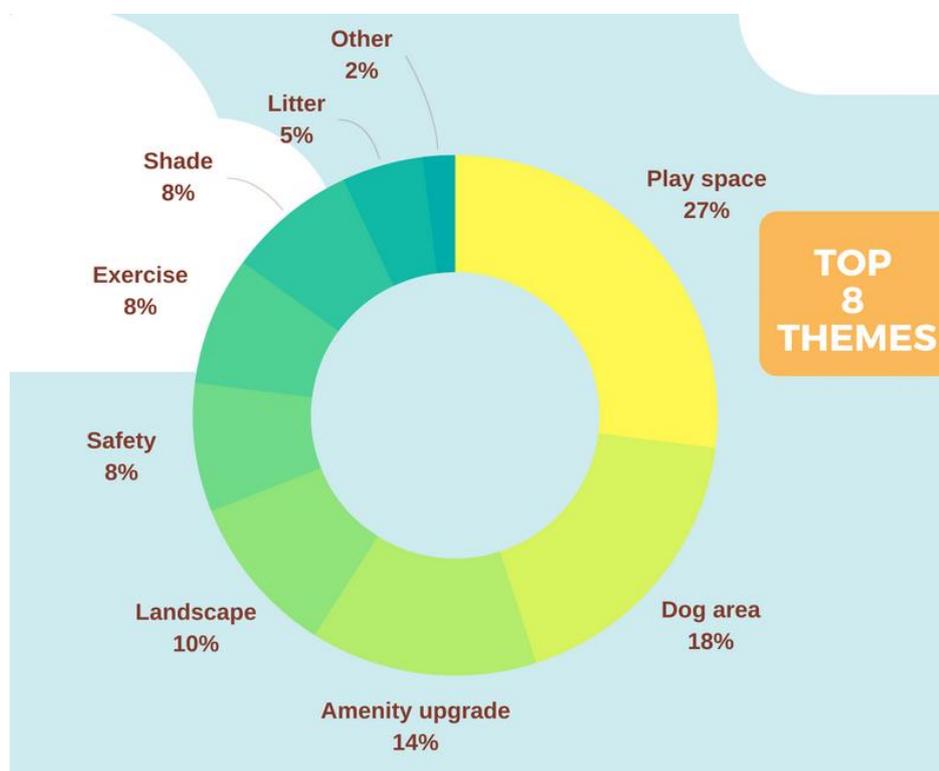
The following activities were conducted to ensure we informed a broad section of our community with information about the project and how to get involved.

| Activity | Description | Reach |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Darebin Community News | Aug / Sept 2018 Issue | Whole of Darebin |
| Media release | One | Darebin Website |
| Council newsletters | Disability Newsletter | |
| YourSay Darebin website | Fortnightly updates following PCG meetings were also published on the site | 84 visitors |
| Social media | Facebook posts/event | 33 went & 283 interested in event |
| Postcard | Local residents invite to Dec event Invite to July event | 5000 5000 |
| Posters | Distributed to local businesses and put up in local park | 50 |
| Darebin City Council website | Updates on Your say page | Not collated |

What we heard

Over 200 comments were captured from the December 2017 consultation. The PCG grouped these into eight key themes (pictured) and used these to form the vision and key design principles. Here is a summary of the key results from the second round of consultation (July/August 2018):

- Over 70% of feedback strongly agreed with the vision (17% agreed).
- Over 80% of feedback rated five out of the six key design principles as 'Very important' or 'Important'.
- The Distinctive Identity principle received mixed results - 13% rating it 'Not at all important'/'Less important'. Despite this, 66% rated it 'Important' or 'Very important'.



Penders Park Vision

Penders Park is a significant gathering place for our diverse and changing community. As a major neighbourhood park, it's a place for play, celebrating, active and passive recreation and connecting with nature.

There was clear support for the vision, with over 80% of online participants expressing agreement with the statement.

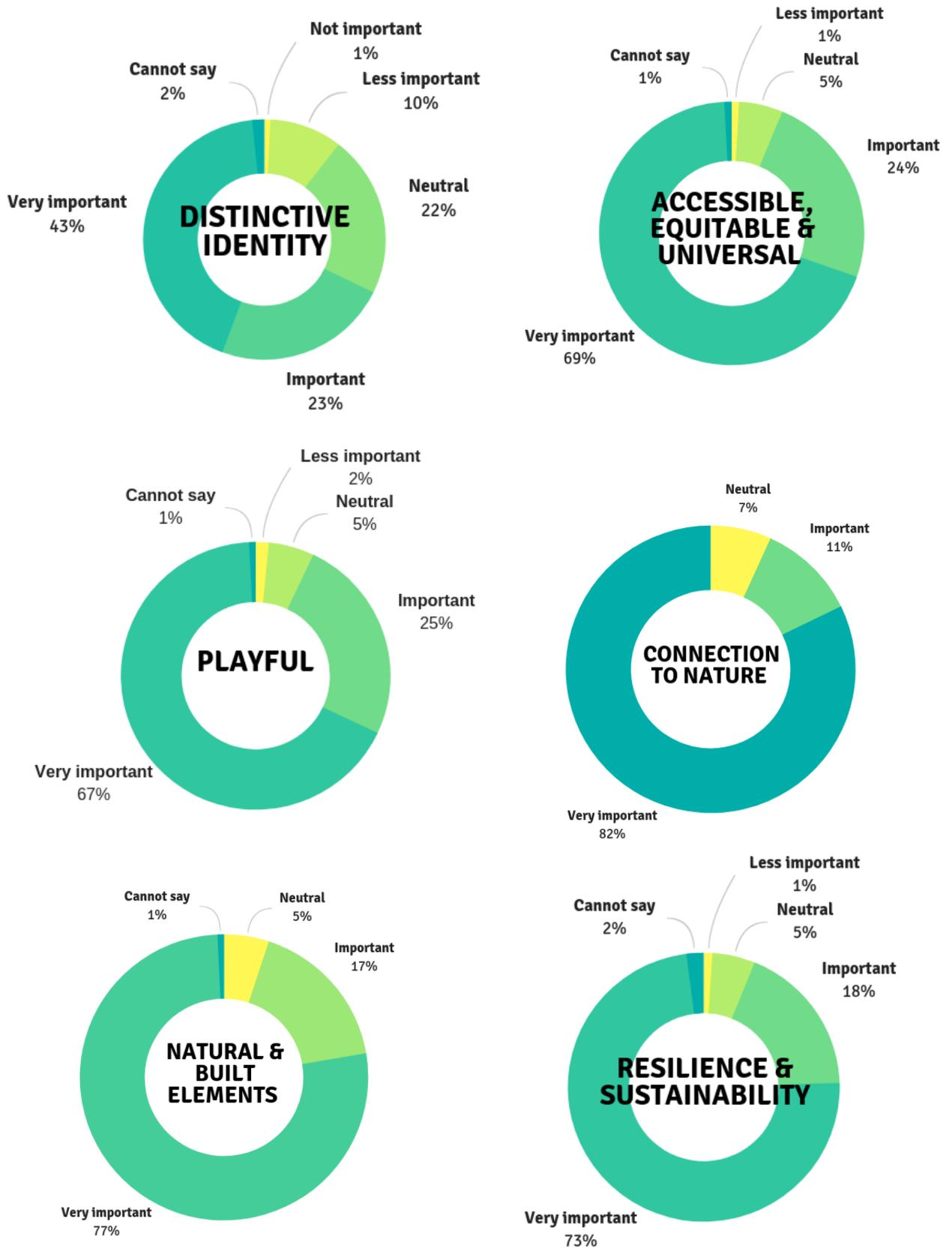
This was echoed in the feedback from the drop-in session where all but one comment expressed agreement. A number of comments emphasised the importance of maintaining an open space for a variety of uses.

"Yes the variety of uses of the space is and should continue to be varied and maintained".

“I love this vision! As our suburb becomes more high density our green spaces are ever more important for recreation, to meet and to come together as a community. Great job guys!”

Key design principles

The following charts show the extent to which the community felt the key design principles were meaningful or important to them.



Overall, feedback from the second round of engagement showed that the community felt the key design principles were relevant and important to them.

Of the feedback received for each of the principles, 40 to 80% rated them as 'Very Important'. Comments demonstrated a good understanding of what the vision and principles are aiming to achieve.

"Great job, this encompasses everything we want our park to be!"

Distinctive Identity

Penders Park is a unique space with a character that everyone recognises and values. The park's identity is shaped by its Indigenous history, heritage design and its culturally diverse community.

Locals had mixed views about the Distinctive Identity principle, with 13% rating it 'Not at all important' or 'Less important' and 22% feeling neutral towards it. This is notable when compared to the other key principles, which received very few not important/less important/neutral votes.

It was suggested in the feedback that the description of this principle was too vague or didn't resonate with some parts of the community. Others suggested that the park was lacking any indigenous recognition at present but were encouraging of this being an important aspect to investigate in the development of the master plan.

"Great principle. Would like to see greater connection with Indigenous cultural heritage."

Accessible, Equitable and Universal

Penders Park is a welcoming and respectful place for everyone to enjoy. The design ensures that anyone can access and use the park and its facilities equitably.

Locals were very supportive of the park being a welcoming and inclusive place for all ages, abilities and cultures, with 93% of feedback rating this principle as 'Very important/Important'. This highlights the importance of accessible facilities such as an all-abilities play space and Changing Places/accessible toilet.

"I would like the park to become more of a 'community centre' that draws / attracts people of all ages and backgrounds to frequent and use."

A common concern in the feedback was about how the connection between dogs, children, picnickers and other users of the park will be managed. Some community members would like to see the play space fenced, equally, some would rather there be a fenced dog exercise area, whilst others want to ensure the park remains as open as possible.

It's important to add that the majority of people agree they want the park to remain universally welcome to all dogs and people.

Playful

Penders Park is a shared space that offers a range of exciting 'play' opportunities for adults, children and dogs, while respecting the needs of everyone.

The Playful principle was popular amongst community members demonstrated by the number of comments we received both online and at the event (68 comments). This was echoed in the December 2017 consultation where 84 comments were collected.

A focus of many of the comments was an all abilities play space that includes nature play elements. Another common theme was exercise equipment for all to use.

“‘Playful’ and ‘connection to nature’ are areas that is (sic) lacking, need to be carefully considered. They can and should mean different things / activities to different age groups, physical capabilities and cultural backgrounds.”

Connection to nature

In a highly urbanised neighbourhood, Penders Park is an oasis of green space for people to connect and experience nature.

The Connection to Nature principle was very popular with 82% of the feedback voting this as ‘Very Important’. The 53 comments provided some useful ideas and considerations for types of planting and shrubs the community would like to see. A few participants would also like to see a community garden. Many comments confirmed the importance of retaining lots of open, green space for the community to enjoy.

As one community member said “Make it a ‘garden’ for all those in the local area that no longer have a backyard. Formal and informal areas, lots more plants.”

Natural and Built Elements

Shade, shelter, lighting, seating and amenities are well designed, constructed and maintained. These elements encourage the community to meet, socialise and provide everyone with a feeling of safety and an enjoyable outdoor experience.

Again, there was clear support for this principle with 77% rating it as ‘Very Important’ (17% Important). Many locals expressed the importance of the park being a safe space and wanted to see improvements to the toilets, traffic management around the park and lighting.

“Agree. Toilets etc. important however safety is critical. They are a barrier. Children disappear from view behind them.”

Resilience and Sustainability

The park’s natural and built elements are robust, easy to maintain, and durable for the long-term to support current and future generations.

Locals expressed clear consensus on the importance of this principle with 73% of the feedback rating it ‘Very Important’ (and 18% Important). Suggestions were provided about how to achieve this outcome.

“...like idea of sustainability the park should integrate water sensitive design rain garden and be a good place to learn about sustainable design.”

Recommendations and next steps

Accessible Play space and toilet facilities

Feedback captured from 2016 to now, clearly indicates that a new, all-abilities play space and accompanying accessible toilets are a priority for the community.

The overwhelming support for the Accessible, Equitable and Universal principle, which states, *“Penders Park is a welcoming and respectful place for everyone to enjoy. The design ensures that anyone can access and use the park and its facilities equitably”* highlights that a Changing Places/accessible toilet facility is essential to achieving our vision and must be considered alongside the play space design. We believe everyone should have the right to use a toilet with dignity no matter who they are in our community.

The next step for the PCG is to develop a brief for the detailed design of the play space and accessible toilet facilities.

Connection

A common concern in the feedback was about how we will manage the connection between dogs, children, picnickers and other users of the park.

The PCG would like to confirm the following in relation to these concerns:

- The park will remain off-leash except for within 10 metres of the play space (as it is currently).
- To comply with the requirements of an all abilities play space, fencing or partial closure is required.
- Natural barriers such as hedges (or another type of planting or design feature) will be considered as an alternative to traditional fencing.
- Community members (including targeted engagement with young people) will be consulted with on the detailed design of the play space.

Distinctive identity

To address concerns about the lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous history in the park's identity, the PCG is engaging with the Wurundjeri Council and the local Aboriginal community to discuss the story of the park and how it can be incorporated into the master plan.

Limitations

The demographics that were underrepresented, such as young people will look to be addressed in the detailed design phases of the master plan, for example targeted consultation with children and young people over the play space design.

Efforts have been made to hear from a diversity of voices, including community members who are considered 'harder to reach' or might have a barrier to engaging. For example, we targeted disability groups that use the park by speaking with them face-to-face to listen to their concerns and ideas. We sent a newsletter to the disability advisory group informing them about the project and inviting them to participate in the event. We have also arranged targeted discussions with Aboriginal advisory groups.

It should also be noted that participants did not have to answer all questions in the online survey, or provide a response to each part of the activity we hosted at the drop-in event. As such, response rates per question will vary.

Engagement Summary to May 2019

Early July 2018

- Letter box drop to residences and businesses within 500 metres of the park to advise of drop in session
- Email notifications and telephone calls to stakeholder groups to advise them of the drop-in session

21-7-18

- Second community drop in session at park
- Approximately 200 people in attendance. See engagement report for further details.

Mid-January 2019

- Letter box drop to residences and businesses within 500 metres of the park to advertise open air cinema event
- Advertising board erected in the park to advertise event
- Emails to stakeholders about the event

9-2-19

- Open air cinema event and further consultation to get more specific information about features local residents would like to see within Penders Park & the play space
- Approximately 200 local residents were engaged in the consultation.

Refer to PENDERS PARK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT prepared by Wendy Holland from Community Vibe for more detail.

24-4-19

- All Abilities Play Space consultation commenced on YourSay Darebin page.
- PCG members provided draft to local primary schools (Wales Street and Pender's Grove) for comment.

6-5-19

- PCG members provided Council with a project update.

8-5-19

- PCG met with Liz Cummins (play space designer) to refine draft concepts and provided school feedback.

17-5-19

- Consultation on All Abilities Play Space closed.
- 13 comments received on the YourSay page.