

APOLLO BAY RECREATION RESERVE DRAFT MASTERPLAN

ENGAGEMENT REPORT







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INTRODUCTION

OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITMENT

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (the Authority) is in an incredibly privileged position to be tasked with protecting and enhancing the Great Ocean Road's coast and parks on behalf of the community.

The Authority is committed to engaging, listening, respecting and reflecting community and stakeholder views in everything we do, as guided by our <u>Community Engagement Strategy</u>.

We are committed to being transparent and open with our communities and building and deepening relationships grounded in reciprocity and trust. Through various channels, mediums and engagement spaces, we will invite feedback, robust discussion and reflection to strengthen our connections and common purpose.

APOLLO BAY RECREATION RESERVE

The Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve (the Reserve) is located just outside of central Apollo Bay alongside the Barham River on the lands of the Eastern Maar. The Reserve is home to the Apollo Bay Football Netball Club, Apollo Bay Cricket Club, Apollo Bay Tennis Club, the annual Apollo Bay & Otway District Agricultural Show and the Pony Club area.

The Reserve plays a pivotal role in the provision of open space, sport, recreation, camping, accommodation, community and event opportunities for locals and visitors.

Established in 1868, the Reserve has had numerous land managers over its long life and remains at the heart of the coastal community of Apollo Bay.

In December 2020, we took on management responsibility for the Reserve.



PROJECT BACKGROUND

Early in 2022, we commenced a Camping Uplift project at the Reserve. This project has funding to upgrade the camping facilities and provide all-abilities access to camping and other camping infrastructure.

We held valuable conversations with the community representative group, annual permit holders and Gambier Street residents on initial concept plans for the Camping Uplift project at the Reserve. Part of the early proposals sought to relocate some of the annual permit sites to introduce a new central camp kitchen and playground area (camping hub).

In response to what we heard during these conversations and upon receiving updated flood advice, the Camping Uplift concept plans were put on hold to incorporate the designs into a broader Masterplan for the Reserve. This took place in October 2022 and was communicated to annual permit holders.

MASTERPLAN PROCESS

The first phase of the Masterplan was to identify issues and opportunities for the Reserve.

Across May to July 2022, we conducted extensive community and stakeholder engagement to understand what issues and opportunities affect the Reserve, including presenting and seeking feedback on the Camping Uplift concept plans.

This information contributed to the creation of the Issues and Opportunities Paper (the Paper). The Paper and its Engagement Report can be found on the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve project page on our website.

Through this engagement program and during Masterplan due diligence on environmental, planning, cultural heritage and safety considerations and requirements, the current and future uses of the Reserve were assessed. This led to a review of annual permit sites, where caravans with fixed annexes can stay in situ for a 12-month period.

Several issues flagged the need to discontinue the issuing of annual permits at the Reserve, these included:

- Updated flood modelling advice from the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, presenting an increased risk to human safety, buildings, and infrastructure
- Competing demands on this site (such as sporting facility provision; community use and events)
- Equitable access to Crown land caravan parks, as described in the Victorian Government's Improving Equity of Access to Crown Land Caravan and Camping Parks 2011.

Combined, this information led to the decision to discontinue annual permits at the Reserve. This decision also impacted a small number of people who are registered to live at the Reserve and we are working closely with these residents to ensure a safe transition into alternative accommodation.







LEGEND

- 1 RECREATION RESERVE ENTRY & EXIT
- 2 CAMPGROUND OFFICE & CHECK-IN BAY
- 3 AMENITY, WORKSHOP, STORAGE & DUMP POINT
 - VISITOR CAR PARKING
- 5 PUBLIC ACCESS ALONG RIVER FORESHORE
- 6 SEASONAL & OVERFLOW CAMPSITES (SEPT-APR)
- 7 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE/ COMMUNITY HUB
- 8 CENTRAL AMENITY BUILDING & TOILETS
- 9 RESERVE PAVILION & SEASONAL CAMP KITCHEN
- 10 RIVERSIDE SEATING & VIEWING PLATFORM
- 11 ALL ABILITIES PLAYGROUND
- 12 INDUSTRIAL HALL / INTERPRETIVE CENTRE
- 13 FOOTBALL /NETBALL /CRICKET/TENNIS CLUBHOUSE
- 14 EXPANDED NETBALL / TENNIS COURT AREA
- 15 ADDITIONAL CRICKET PRACTICE NET
- 16 GLAMPING PRECINCT
- 17 NORTHERN AMENITY & BBQ SHELTER
- 18 COMMUNAL SPACE
- 19 TOURIST CABIN ACCOMMODATION
- 20 TREE PLANTING & OVERFLOW CAR PARKING
- PONY CLUB TO BE RELOCATED IN THE MEDIUM TO LONG TERM

CAMPGROUND SITE NUMBERS

- 14 TOURIST CABINS
- 10 GLAMPING TENTS WITH ENSUITE
- 10 GLAMPING TENTS (POP-UP)
- 64 SEASONAL CAMPSITES
- 3 RESIDENT SITES
- 27 OVERFLOW CAMPSITES
- 128 TOTAL

KEY

RESERVE BOUNDARY



EXISTING VEGETATION



INDICATIVE EXISTING & PROPOSED TREES



0 10m 20m 30m 40m 50m 60m 70m 80m

APOLLO BAY RECREATION RESERVE DRAFT MASTERPLAN - HIGH SEASON

PREPARED BY:



PREPARED FOR:

APRIL 2023



ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The draft Masterplan engagement period across June and July 2023 followed extensive engagement undertaken in 2022 on the issues and opportunities at the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve.

The function of the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve Masterplan is to guide the future land use, management and development of the Reserve over a ten-year timeframe to achieve identified outcomes for Rights Holders, local community, visitors to the region, and the environment.

The draft Masterplan presents a framework for the balanced redevelopment of the Reserve's established sporting and recreation facilities and campground, while improving cultural heritage protection, environmental outcomes and responding to the local impacts of climate change, including flood risk.

This framework also considered our legislative requirements as Crown Land caravan park managers in line with the Victorian Government policy for *Improving Equity of Access to Crown Land caravan and Camping Parks* 2011.

The draft Masterplan reflects community aspirations for the Reserve to be retained as a central hub for recreation, events, activities and general use by locals and visitors, and key features include:

- Improved community facilities such as a new pavilion and camp kitchen, an upgrade and repurpose of the Industrial Hall for community use, a new playground and increased open space with shaded areas, public BBQ, picnic tables and pathways.
- New facilities will be accessible to provide greater access for people of all abilities
- Improvements to existing sporting facilities including new football, netball, cricket and tennis clubrooms and changerooms, a new netball and tennis court area and an additional cricket practice net
- A shift to a seasonal campground in the southern part of the Reserve will enable the grassed area to be used by the local community and visitors between May and August
- Continuous public access along the entire Barham River foreshore and the potential for a viewing platform on the existing bridge
- A general uplift to accommodation facilities such as a camp kitchen, toilet blocks, amenity facilities, roads and car parking.

The June – July 2023 engagement with community and key stakeholders invited feedback on the draft Masterplan to ensure we got the balance right, addressing where practicable the aspirations of the local community, visitors and the many different users groups who cherish the sporting reserve and camping grounds.

Feedback received during this engagement has been analysed and where appropriate changes will be made to the Masterplan to ensure it balances the community's aspirations, the functional needs of the Reserve as a tourist destination and complies with current legislated requirements.

HOW WE ENGAGED

A six-week engagement and inform program, across June and July 2023 had two purposes:

- To present the draft Masterplan for community feedback to inform the final Masterplan see previous page
- To advise annual permit holders and registered residents that permits at the Reserve will be discontinued from April 2024

Details of the project and the engagement opportunities were provided on our project webpage, our dedicated Have Your Say engagement platform and via a comprehensive traditional and digital media schedule.

A total of 37 days of engagement was undertaken, including in-person and online events, stakeholder meetings and an online survey.

- 16 engagement sessions were held:
 - 20 June meeting with the interim Apollo Bay Community Voice group
 - 21 June meeting with Colac Otway Shire Councillors
 - 27 June Six meetings held to inform annual permit holders and registered residents of the discontinuation of their sites as of April 2024 and discussion around how we would support this process. This included two meetings with annual permit holders, one meeting with the Stakeholder Reference Group, and three individual meetings with registered residents
 - 1 July additional meeting with annual permit holders
 - 1 July community engagement session, Apollo Bay Community Market
 - 15 July community engagement session, Apollo Bay Community Market
 - 9 July community engagement session, Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve clubrooms
 - 13 July community engagement session, Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve clubrooms
 - 13 July Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce meeting
 - 14 July Apollo Bay Cricket Club meeting
 - 19 July online community engagement session



200

people (approximately) people met with us in person or online



109

surveys completed – 21 sporting precinct surveys, 29 community precinct surveys, 38 camping precinct surveys, and 21 vision and land use surveys



13

written submissions received



10

adverts/articles featured in local media



531

visitors to the Have Your Say page



6921

reach across
4 Facebook posts



2393

post impressions across 3 LinkedIn posts



200

video views

KEY FINDINGS

Three revised precincts were identified in the draft Masterplan included a sporting precinct, a community precinct and a camping precinct. In addition, a vision and guiding principles for the development of the precinct were drafted to provide an overarching direction for the Masterplan

Feedback showed strong support for the community and sporting precincts, while mixed feedback was received on the camping precinct due largely to an introduction of glamping tents and the shift away from annual permit sites to a seasonal campground.

The overwhelming sentiment expressed throughout the engagement was that improvements to the Reserve were well overdue. Overall, 74% of respondents either supported the plans or were neutral.

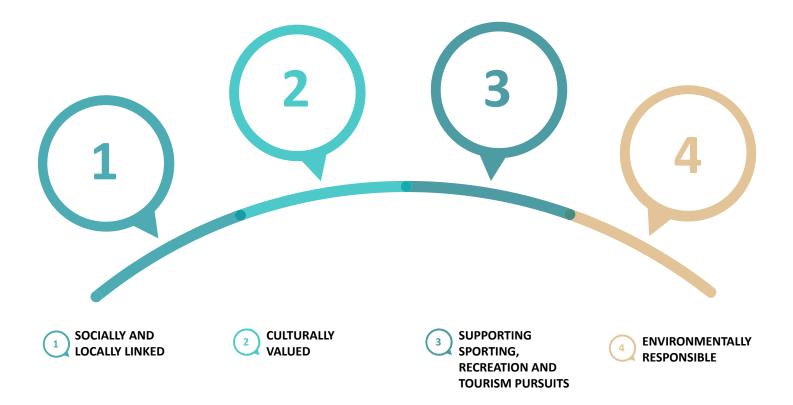
The following is a summary of all data sources including feedback from the 109 submitted surveys, 13 written submissions and the information captured in the face-to-face sessions.

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The proposed vision for the Reserve states;

"The Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve is a place that supports local community sports and events whilst providing alternative tourist accommodation that respects the site's environmental and cultural values."

The proposed four guiding principles are:



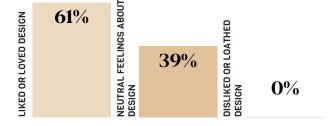
Feedback on the vision and guiding principles included:

- The word 'recreation' (both passive and active recreation) was missing from the vision and examples were
 given such as how the river could be better utilised for fishing and other activities such as kayaks and standup paddleboards
- · Questions were raised clarifying the term 'alternative tourist accommodation'
- Many participants told us the park is family friendly, approachable and affordable and that should be reflected in the vision
- Many were supportive of the Environmentally Responsible pillar in the guiding principles, but thought sustainability was lacking, and 'one health" was suggested as a phrase for this pillar.

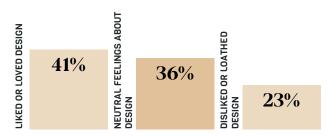
OVERALL PRECINCT RANKINGS

To gauge overall sentiment about the three precincts, participants were asked to rank how they felt about each, and the following results emerged:

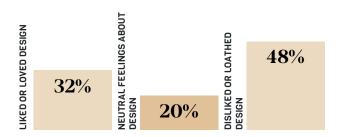




COMMUNITY PRECINCT

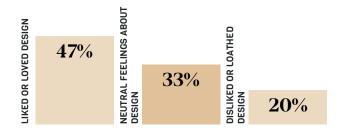


CAMPING PRECINCT

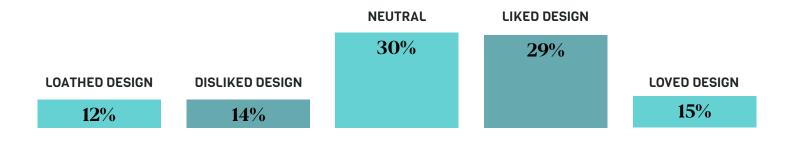


When asked how they felt about the overall land use and allocation of precincts, participants gave the following rating:

LAND USE/ALLOCATION AT THE RESERVE



When all survey results were combined, 74% of the community were in favour of the Masterplan or neutral.



KEY THEMES

Many great suggestions were made during the engagement process, including what community felt had been missed in the plans, and other general comments about the layout and facilities that are proposed in the draft Masterplan.

The following 'themes' emerged from all feedback received:



- General concern that car parking had reduced and needed to be reassessed
- Specific requests for additional parking space next to the netball courts
- Concern about insufficient parking on sporting match days

ACCESS POINTS AND PATHWAYS

- Suggestions to provide a continuous access track behind the northern goal posts to meet the cricket nets
- Request to have the access point from the Reserve to the western end of Gambier Street (near the junction of Barham River Road) included on the plans
- Suggestion to move the footpath that exits onto Gambier Street slightly westward so runoff from Cartwright Street doesn't damage the path
- Request to show bike riding access/storage points on the plans
- Request to show the public access pathway along the river on the plan

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

- Suggestion to use sensory materials and natural materials in the playground
- Request to install a canoe/kayak launching ramp relatively close to car parking on the river
- Clarification that the historic tennis club building and BBQ area will be retained
- Suggestion to erect a meshed fence to stop cricket balls hitting tents and caravans when summer campsites are in use around the oval
- Suggestion to include a turning circle in the accommodation precinct so travellers with caravans can turn around
- · Request to ensure grey water dump locations prevent pollution of waterways, particularly near Barham River



ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES

- Consideration for solar panels to supply the Reserve
- Consideration of other Environmentally Sensitive Design (ESD) features such as water use
- Use of indigenous species for ecological restoration
- Suggestion that river monitoring activities and education could be a feature of the Reserve



CAMPING AND ACCOMMODATION CHANGES

- General concern about the reduction in campsites
- Requests for some camping to be provided in the low season
- Concerns the plan reduces low-cost opportunities for people to holiday in Apollo Bay
- Consideration of a better balance between standard camping sites and glamping sites
- · Concerns glamping tents are not in keeping with the feel of the Reserve and the town of Apollo Bay as a whole
- Concerns that traffic to access the accommodation area will be an issue on sporting match days
- Concerns that caravans were not mentioned in the Masterplan and should be included



DISCONTINUING ANNUAL PERMITS

- Annual permit holders were disappointed by the news that annual permits are being discontinued at the Reserve and some provided specific feedback, particularly in relation to their connectedness to the Reserve over a long period of time, friendships within the group, and general support for the town
- Questions were raised about the draft Masterplan process, and why annual permits were being discontinued prior to the completion of the Masterplan (*see below for further information)
- Some community members showed empathy towards the annual permit holders, regarding them as long-term supporters of the town, and questioned whether removing the annuals will have an adverse impact on the town and worker strain
- · Some community members welcomed the equity of access provision and removal of annual permit holders
- Sentiment that removing the old caravans on site will enhance the Reserve

An annual permit allows a permit holder to place their caravan on a dedicated site for a 12 month period. Occupants can apply to renew the permit at the end of the 12 months, however it is important to note that an annual permit is not a guarantee for access to that site in subsequent years.

^{*} With consideration of matters outlined in the Issues and Opportunities Paper, particularly flood risk, public safety, compliance and equity of access, we have progressed with issuing notices for the discontinuation of annual permits beyond 17 April 2024.



SEASONAL WORKER ACCOMMODATION

- Consider an area within the campground for semi-permanent/longer-term residents to help address the housing issues for seasonal workers and low-income residents
- Concerns the removal of annual permit site holders and campsites will place added financial and worker strain on the community
- · Request to provide year-round, low-season and housing accommodation for seasonal workers

0

PRIORITISING SPORTING UPGRADES

- Requests for upgrades to sporting changerooms and bathrooms (for female sports) to be prioritised ahead of the Clubroom rebuild
- Request for netball and tennis court lines to be clearly marked to reduce confusion
- · Requested confirmation that the historic tennis clubhouse and BBQs will stay

0

FLOODING AND DRAINAGE ISSUES

- Consideration for better drainage and infrastructure to make this facility useful year-round
- Request to address drainage on the football oval to avoid reoccurring flooding
- Request for better drainage systems near the entrance to the Reserve

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GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT MASTERPLAN

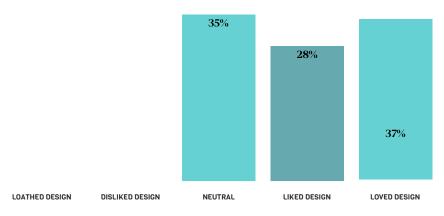
- General support for upgrades to the Reserve and returning this Crown land for the benefit of all Victorians
- Questions were posed around the funding for the Masterplan and timing for implementation
- · Some feedback questioned the flooding advice and statements on climate change

SPORTING PRECINCT RESULTS





How do you feel about the new design for the sporting precinct?



COMMENTS ON THE SPORTING PRECINCT:

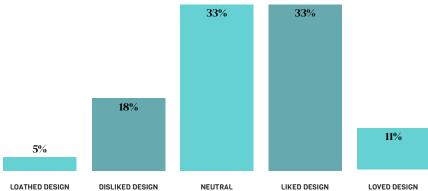
- "The existing tennis building would be lovely to keep as it's part of the history to the sports area."
- "Really need to upgrade the women's netball rooms. It is really
 embarrassing when other teams come to play and we don't even provide
 them with a shower, toilet and basic private needs. I would love to see
 these prioritised."
- "Overall plan for precinct does not have enough gameday or training night parking where up to 100 cars need to be parked on a game day what alternative parking arrangements will there be?"
- "The cost of all these plans is going to be enormous, so I'd be interested to know which will be prioritised and which proposed plans may have to be shelved."
- "New cricket nets are needed as they are very old and there are more teams with females joining"
- "It is of high importance to resurface the tennis/netball courts as there are cracks now appearing in the existing surface."
- "Having a well-maintained football, cricket, tennis and netball precinct will really boost community involvement"
- "This football oval floods every year. Your master plan has failed to recognize the need for better drainage and other infrastructure to make this facility useful year-round."
- "Thinking long term is fine, but why long term? Your plans go on and on about the local community, do what they want first."
- "The new plans look fantastic!! It's a much-needed revamp."
- "Ensure that campers have free access to facilities."

COMMUNITY PRECINCT RESULTS





How do you feel about the new design for the community precinct?



COMMENTS ON THE COMMUNITY PRECINCT:

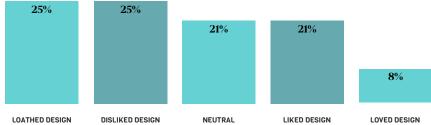
- "A dedicated Makers Space to house the growing and vibrant Arts
 Community of Apollo Bay and nearby locations visual arts, performing
 arts, music, pottery, dance to name a few. A space with potential to engage
 with tourists by way of workshops."
- "I really like the return of the riverside to being a community walkway and associated facilities."
- "Just create a space where folk don't get bogged and it doesn't look like a shanty town!"
- "The precinct has been used consistently for years as it is and does not need to be changed, due to the reduced camping facilities it will hugely impact the community negatively."
- "The community precinct should be located at the front of the park for tourists, attached to the sporting facilities for families attending games, not half-way through the park. The current location divides the park in half and uproots long-standing community members who have done more for the local community than the government over the last 50 years."
- "There is no reason to not renew the annual permits for current holders as they bring money into the park that can be used to improve the toilets, the camp kitchen and put a playground up for the kids."
- "Update toilets, Update playground, Update roads, Keep the family affordable park for tents and vans."
- "Install a canoe/kayak launching ramp relatively close to car parking on the river."
- "An all-abilities playground is nice, but wouldn't it get more use on the foreshore area."
- "The facility you're proposing would be better suited in the township rather than in this location. You've got it wrong."
- "The original bridge could simply be repaired, made safer and include features for fishing which has always been a very popular activity amongst the people who happily already use the reserve."
- "Car parking, public access, availability of facilities for all as the area was intended to be for community use when it was originally bequeathed to the Apollo Bay community."

CAMPING PRECINCT RESULTS





How do you feel about the new design for the camping precinct?

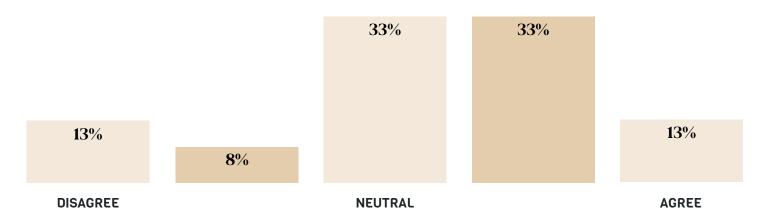


Comments about the camping precinct are on the next page.

COMMENTS ON THE CAMPING PRECINCT:

- "Ensure regular campers, particular families that have been coming down for a number of years, are still able to enjoy the
 camping experience. New amenities are a must, but more importantly they need to be cleaned at least three times a day in peak
 periods."
- "Please create synthetic grass sites. They can be used all year round for tents and vans. Also create big concrete parks for buses who visit for sporting, camping and entertaining.
- "Affordable for families, tents and vans. No glamping, that's for rich folks who don't come back. Have cabins for the rich as more fit into park up the front. People love the raw feel of the park. If you want high-class go somewhere else."
- "I think that the new design is wonderful it is capturing the pretty areas alongside the river for tourists to peacefully enjoy throughout all the year. I hope that there is still easy walking access alongside the river up to the end of the park and the road that takes a pedestrian through to the back of Gambier St the walk through would need to not be intrusive to the cabiners/campers but still allow townsfolk the stroll alongside the river."
- "I think it is a clever plan as it avoids the boggy areas over the winter. I am pleased that the open (mostly boggy) land alongside Gambier Street is retained. It is an important walk through area for the townsfolk."
- "Permanent cabins have more longevity than glamping tents, particularly in the coastal climate suggest replacing the 10 glamping tents with small cabins."
- "There should also be an area within the campground for semi-permanent (longer-term) residents to help address the housing issues for seasonal workers and low-income residents. Please keep the permanent residents. Make sure there are more camping sites at low prices not glamping sites."
- "Glamping is not a good idea. Try tiny houses instead. They are warmer, last longer and can be towed anywhere. Please don't do Glamping. It gets mouldy and flaps in the wind. It's not soundproof either and gets cold. I have been part of some glamping projects before and they are not good here."
- "I like the different zones, the peaceful areas for the cabins and glampers, the priority over the sporting facilities and the separation of the sporting facilities from the camping is very well thought out."
- "It's just a crazy idea all up. Take away cheap camping and replace it with expensive camping! Families without lots of disposable income should be able to access cheap camping all year round and enjoy our fantastic town."
- "Glad to see the removal of the ugly old caravans and other structures associated with 'annual permit' holders."
- "Removes all the crappy long-term on site set ups that have the benefit of utilizing Crown Land for their own benefit for a long period to the exclusion of everyone else. If they want to camp for summer, make a booking. Appears overloaded with glamping tents, with not enough on-site van/camping opportunities."
- "Upgrades to communal facilities are great but please revise the plan to retain a focus on the lowest cost accom' options as has always been the understood role of the park in our community."
- "Will there be both powered and non-powered sites in peak season? Many families are complaining that they can't afford to bring the family to the coast anymore during school holidays. the new ideas are lovely but are they aimed towards the upper end of the market?"

In addition, participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the proposed land use at the Reserve?



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NEXT STEPS

Feedback received from this engagement period has been considered and where appropriate it has been incorporated into the final version of the Reserve Masterplan. This final Masterplan will be presented to the Authority Board for their consideration and a recommendation for endorsement will be sought. This is scheduled to occur in October 2023.

We look forward to sharing the final Masterplan with community and stakeholders following the Board's anticipated endorsement in October. Meanwhile, the Authority continues to work with annual permit holders and registered residents during their transition to remove fixed assets from the Reserve in a safe and respectful manner by April 2024.

Once the Masterplan is adopted by the Authority Board, the next step is to implement the identified actions in the Masterplan over the next ten years as funding is secured.

We have been successful in obtaining grant funding for camping uplifts at the Reserve and it is anticipated that the first stage of works will commence late 2023. This includes detailed design for the campground upgrades as funded through the Camping Uplift grant and supporting sporting clubs to progress with grant applications for design and construction.

Works to construct and improve accommodation at the Reserve are funded through a \$2 million grant from the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions Camping Uplift for the Great Ocean Road Region – Apollo Bay grant, \$940,000 from the DEECA Great Ocean Road Visitor Experience Uplift grant and \$200,000 in-kind from the Authority.

