

WHAT WE HEARD

Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve – Camping Uplift

The Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve (the Reserve) is a popular location used for sports, camping and events. The Reserve was established in 1868 and has had numerous land managers over its long life and remains at the heart of the coastal community of Apollo Bay.

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (the Authority) commenced management of the Reserve in December 2020. In early 2022, we began working on plans to upgrade the camping offerings and undertake a Masterplan process at the Reserve.

The project is funded as part of the Tourism Infrastructure Program – Flagship projects for the region that was announced in the Victorian Government’s \$465 million Victorian Tourism Recovery Package. These works are also supported by the Victorian Government’s Great Ocean Road Visitor Experience Uplift grant and Changing Places program.

This funding would enable the project to deliver:

- a \$2.9 million Camping Uplift project to introduce 20 new glamping pods (10 of which would be DDA compliant), new powered and unpowered campsites, and all-abilities facilities upgrades to the toilet and shower blocks, camp kitchen area and playground equipment
- a new [Changing Places](#) facility
- a Masterplan to assess the current and future needs of the Reserve.

To visit our website and learn more about the project, click [here](#).

To meet funding agreement and timeline requirements, the project was divided into two phases. The Phase One Camping Uplift project focused on delivering upgrades to the campground by the end of 2022 to support the busy summer season. The Phase Two Masterplan process involved a longer timeframe that commenced in 2022 and will continue into 2023. This timeline will allow the contributions of community, stakeholders, government agencies and endorsement processes.

JANUARY - MARCH 2022: PHASE ONE CAMPING UPLIFT PROJECT INITIATION

To inform the project, a Community Reference Group (CRG) was established in January 2022 and transitioned into the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) in April 2022. To develop a concept plan for the Phase One Camping Uplift project, a series of meetings were held with the Project Team, SRG and appointed designers and architects, Herbert & Mason.

The SRG was made up of representatives from the Reserve’s sporting groups, 12-month permit holders in the Reserve’s caravan park, the Colac Otway Shire Council, Great Ocean Road Health, the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce, Southern Otway Landcare network, disability consultants and an appointed representative from neighbouring Gambier Street.

The SRG members were asked about the project’s aims and how the campground improvements would ensure it is a welcoming space for all to enjoy. SRG members said:

“The location of the pods needs to have accessible paths for access to other site facilities and also consideration for accessing the Apollo Bay township”.



When asked about the best location for the Changing Places facility, comments received included:

“Ideally the Changing Places amenity block would be located with other accessible facilities - ie playground, picnic/BBQ/ kitchen facilities”, and “It would be good if the accessible facilities and playground were also visible from the tennis/ netball courts.”

The first concept plan showed the bathroom facility upgrades, proposed a location for the Changing Places facility alongside a new all-abilities playground and camp kitchen and proposed locations for the new glamping pods and campsites.



Concept Plan #1 released March 2022

Meetings were also held with the permitted campers of the caravan park. Permitted campers hold a 12-month permit to stay at the Reserve in a permanent caravan and annex for up to 180 days per year. Some campers at the Reserve have held permits for over 40 years. The Authority currently offers 56 permits.

Meetings with the permitted campers highlighted concerns with the request from the Authority to relocate 10 campers to other sites within the Reserve. This move would allow for the proposed new common area offering an enhanced playground and camp kitchen area.

Comments received during these meetings included:

“For us permitted campers who are impacted, will we be compensated to move sites, and how will it work?”

“How many people will use the Changing Places facility? Will it encourage more people to come through the park? Did we (the Authority) look into the historical data of what was here before?”

The Project Team has provided updates to the permitted campers as information became available and held individual meetings with the impacted campers about relocation.



Aerial view of proposed common area

Proposed expanded common area

MARCH – APRIL 2022: CONCEPT PLAN #2 DEVELOPED AND FAQ RELEASED

During the development of the first Concept Plan for the Camping Uplift project, it became evident that the Reserve’s neighbouring households on Gambier Street would be affected by the proposed upgrades. The major factors impacting these residents was the proposed glamping pods and additional camping to be located on the hillside closest to Gambier Street.

Around this time, other enquiries were made about the project’s aims and timing, and more broadly about the Authority as new managers of the Reserve. A series of questions about this project were also put to the Colac Otway Shire Council.

Enquiries from community members included:

“How can works on Phase 1 commence when there is no masterplan?”

“Will GORCAPA commit to completing the proposed masterplan for the Rec Reserve before (not after) Phase 1 of the project?”

A FAQ document was created to address these questions and was published on the Authority's website. To view the FAQ document, click [here](#).

Meetings with Gambier Street residents and homeowners commenced in April 2022. These residents and homeowners expressed a range of concerns around the visual, sound and behavioural impacts on their neighbourhood, as well as functionality of the pods for people living with disability.



FAQ document

Comments received included:

“The location of the pods on the hill are problematic due to the disabled campers would be entirely dependent upon their carer to transport them - due to the steepness of the hill”

“The aims to deliver more accessible camping must take into account proper design principles to ensure proposed accommodation (glamping pod) is properly designed for purpose - ie: adequate heating and cooling, disabled bathroom facilities, access paths through the reserve, proper provision of parking for guests and visitors”

“The impact on local traffic and pedestrians, amenity for residents in the township and immediate neighbourhood - not just Gambier Street, but also Cartwright Street, Noel Street, and Diana Street [needs to be considered].”

To address these concerns, the Project Team worked closely with the Gambier Street residents to update the Concept Plan and locate the glamping pods further down the hill. It was also agreed that no new campsites would be placed on the hillside until after the Masterplan process was completed.

Concept plan #2 was released at the end of May 2022 in time for the Masterplan engagement.

MAY – JUNE 2022: MASTERPLAN ENGAGEMENT

While the Camping Uplift project designs and tender process progressed, engagement commenced with the wider Apollo Bay community for the site Masterplan.

See the What We Heard document for the Masterplan engagement [here](#).