



WHAT WE HEARD

Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve – Masterplan

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.

MASTERPLAN ENGAGEMENT

Between May and June 2022, we sought feedback on the 'Issues and Opportunities' for a Masterplan at the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve. The Reserve is home to the Apollo Bay Football Netball Club (ABFNC), Apollo Bay Cricket Club, Apollo Bay Tennis Club, the annual Apollo Bay & Otway District Agricultural Show and the Pony Club area on the other side of the Great Ocean Road. The Reserve also provides campgrounds alongside the Barham River.

The Masterplan process aims to establish a shared vision for the precinct to guide and manage change, while conserving and enhancing the natural, cultural, coastal, tourism and local community values of the area. A 10-year vision for the Reserve will be created, including developments from the Camping Uplift project, and will be delivered in consultation with partners, stakeholders and community. To learn more about what we heard during the Camping Uplift engagement, [click here](#).

Masterplan consultants, Integrated Site Design (ISD) worked side-by-side with our Project Team to identify the Issues and Opportunities from the local Apollo Bay community and key stakeholders. This information will guide the preparation of a Masterplan for the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve.



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Input was sought through community drop-in events, key stakeholder meetings and an online survey. The purpose of these activities was to create a platform to engage with the broader community on issues impacting the Reserve, seek their input on what's important to them and identify options to address those issues. As part of this engagement, feedback was invited on the Phase One Camping Uplift project designs.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Together with ISD we held a range of community events over the last weekend of May and first week of June 2022. Across these events, more than 200 people participated in engagement opportunities, including sessions at the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve, Apollo Bay Bakery, Apollo Bay Market and an online session. In addition, a joint event was held with the Colac Otway Shire Council at the Apollo Bay Golf Club as part of the Community Infrastructure Plan process.

An online survey was also hosted on the Authority's website from 17 May to 30 June.

WHAT WE HEARD

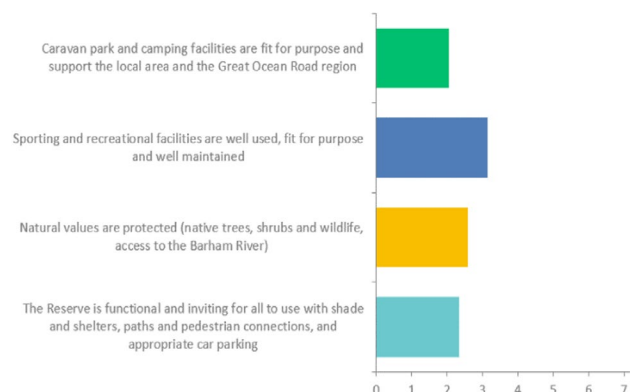
Of the 125 responses received via the online survey, the major age group identified within the range 41–60 (51%). The majority access the Reserve weekly (44%) and / or monthly (28%), with the primary reason for visiting being recreational purposes (53%), other than organised sport.

Other reasons for visiting the Reserve included recreational fishing, walking, dog walking, barbecue, picnic and playground facilities. The Agricultural Show, other events, Pony Club, camping and watching other activities are also mentioned.

Participation in sports activities included tennis (24%), cricket (5%), netball (17%) and AFL (15%). When asked whether the current sporting opportunities meet expectations (scored on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1 highest), the responses were positive with highest scored being AFL (2.26), followed by netball (2.61), cricket (2.51) and tennis (2.92). However, the Pony Club scored lower with 3.11.

When asked to prioritise the features of the Reserve, respondents rated all aspects of the Reserve with equal priority – caravan and camping facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, protection of natural values, and functionality and access.

Q9: Please prioritise the following features of the Reserve on a scale of 1 - 4 (1 being most important, 4 least important).



Survey results question 9

The majority of respondents (49%) placed a high level of importance on maintaining the sporting facilities and that they are fit for purpose, while the caravan park scored the importance of maintenance as less important at 16%.

Most believe that the current recreational buildings, while located appropriately (72%), are not fit for purpose (67%). The majority feel that these buildings should be made available for other uses (82%).

"The Recreation park was purchased for the establishment and intention of recreation for children and community to have involvement in sporting activities, increase mental, emotional and physical health of community, give children somewhere to socialise and something to do - as regional towns often have minimal activities for their community."

Following further consultation, the Authority was informed the reserve was not gifted to the community but was rather Crown land that was not allocated to private land ownership. The reserve remains as part of the Crown land estate.

PROPOSED CAMPGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

Most respondents were in favour of the new campground improvements, 22% love it and 42% like it, while a large section (25%) was neutral. The glamping pods received mixed responses. While 10% love it and 23% like it, another 23% were neutral and 24% don't like it, with 20% hating it.



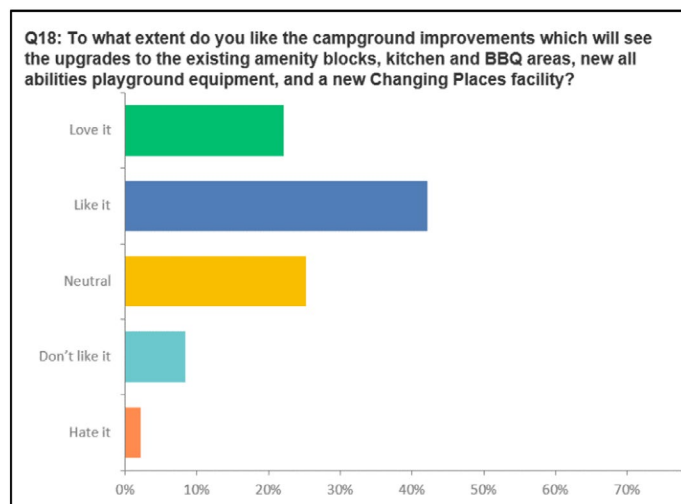
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“Apollo Bay is still very much a seasonal destination. These pods are not likely to get enough use throughout the year to be able to be kept in best possible condition. After 12 months they are likely to deteriorate without constant use and care and will eventually become an eyesore that would only be used at premium times of the year, summer, Easter and premium long weekends.”



Survey results question 18

The introduction of new camping sites was generally not supported by respondents, with 51% against sites on hillside, 52% against additional sites and 57% against additional sites in the overflow area.

When asked what sorts of accommodation options could be considered at the Reserve there was a clear indication that more types of accommodation options should be made available for seasonal workers (74%).

Of the other accommodation options (cabins, glamping, powered and unpowered camping, seasonal accommodation and seasonal worker accommodation), respondents preferred offering more or the same as currently offered.

The Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce highlighted the importance of providing seasonal worker accommodation options and that this should be included in the Masterplan, supporting the online survey responses.

All environmental values were considered important, with planning for sea level rise, riparian zone, river and koala habitat the most highly ranked.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Face-to-face meetings were held with representatives of the ABFNC, Apollo Bay Cricket Club, Apollo Bay Tennis Club and the Otway Riding and Pony Club and a representative of the Apollo Bay Agricultural Society.

KEY POINTS RAISED BY STAKEHOLDERS

RESERVE MANAGEMENT

Management of the Reserve was raised as an issue with the future management responsibility to be examined further.

PLAYGROUND

Issues were raised by the sporting clubs in relation to quality and safety. Line of sight is not clear from sporting facilities, which increases risks to children.

SKATE PARK LOCATION

Community concern was raised over the future of the Apollo Bay Skate Park at its current location in town. The Reserve was proposed as a possible alternative location. The skate park was also a feature throughout the online survey responses.

“We need a bigger skatepark and the rec reserve would be a great place for bigger skatepark”

PARKING

Sporting clubs and the Agricultural Show Society highlighted the importance of maintaining on-reserve parking and the need to future-proof by restricting camping spots. Perimeter parking for football is essential for the continuation of traditional spectator practices, while parking for the Agricultural Show raises funds for the event.

SPORTING GROUPS

Sporting groups identified the need to upgrade the current facilities to provide much-needed storage space and to bring the change rooms and toilets up to required standards. This was also supported by strong online response.

FACILITIES AND BUILDINGS

ABFNC members (with club funds) built the Reserve's social rooms in 1993. Maintenance and upkeep of facilities and grounds is undertaken primarily by the club, with assistance from others. There is currently no management agreement in place. Feedback from members highlighted that the facilities and buildings are inadequate and need to be upgraded.

Feedback also included the need for upgrades to the netball and tennis court surfaces and courts and modifications to bring them in line with current standards. The tennis club highlighted the importance of the historic clubhouse, built in 1921. It is a priority of the club that the clubhouse remains part of the club's operations. The club are happy with its current location but are open to discussion on moving it to another location on the Reserve.

Cricket club nets need major maintenance and additional net to comply with standards.

The Apollo Bay Sailing Club has requested consideration of storage space at the Reserve due to the club's inability to secure space elsewhere to date.

OTWAY RIDING AND PONY CLUB

The Otway Riding and Pony Club highlighted the importance of safe and adequate parking at the current location, exiting onto the Great Ocean Road. The Pony Club car park is open to the general public and has a large tree which impedes users from parking. The site is also home to a fill point and is used by Council as a dump site for construction materials. These factors all combine to impact the safe off-loading of horses in the space.

Feedback from the club further notes the lack of facilities, poor fencing and fields. The current lease agreement has lapsed and is currently under review by the Authority.

AGRICULTURAL SHOW SOCIETY

The Apollo Bay Agricultural Show Society (the Society) stated its importance to the welfare of the community. The Agricultural Show is a one-day event held in late March each year and attracts some 1,500 - 2,000 patrons. The event operates under the jurisdiction of the Victorian Agricultural Shows Ltd., with the last Agricultural Show being run in 2019.

The Society highlighted the importance of its relationship with the Apollo Bay Pony Club. The area currently occupied by the Pony Club contributes to the successful running of the Agricultural Show by providing a safe space for horses to be corralled, accommodation for participants and storage for show equipment such as horse jumps. The equipment remains stored at the Pony Club for use throughout the year. The Society also uses the Industrial Hall for storage.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Feedback from emergency services included the need for ambulance and disability access at the Reserve to be maintained.

Emergency services were contacted and while they have no major issues with the Masterplan, they wished to remain included in the process.

COLAC OTWAY SHIRE COUNCIL COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

Representatives from the Colac Otway Shire Council attended stakeholder meetings and provided comments and feedback on issues raised from the Council and state sporting associations. The issues raised included:

- Netball and tennis courts area
- Cricket training nets area
- Road relocation and repositioning

The ABFNC's proposed pavilion design, including comments from Colac Otway Shire Council, AFL Victoria, Cricket Victoria, Tennis Victoria and Netball Victoria.

These comments are made to assist in future proofing the Reserve and to provide compliant sporting facilities.

OTHER RESERVE STAKEHOLDERS

The Issues and Opportunities stage of Masterplan engagement also engaged with local agencies. These included the Colac Otway Shire Council, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Barwon Water, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism and the local emergency service providers. We have also worked with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation to undertake cultural heritage assessments.



KEY FINDINGS

- Local residents clearly expressed the importance to the community of the Apollo Bay Recreation Reserve and its sporting and cultural identity.
- The community rated all aspects of the Reserve with equal priority – caravan and camping facilities, sporting and recreational facilities, protection of natural values, functionality and access.
- The community is generally supportive of the caravan park improvements and consider them much-needed. However, there is some disagreement over the benefits of new camping sites and glamping pods.
- There is a clear indication that more accommodation should be made available for seasonal workers. This is strongly supported by the Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce.
- Sporting groups identified the need to upgrade current facilities to provide much-needed storage space and to bring the change rooms and toilets up to required standards. The cricket nets, netball and tennis courts need to be realigned to conform to current standards. The Apollo Bay Sailing Club is seeking the inclusion of storage facilities for their safety boats, which are currently stored on private property. However the club has no long-term tenure.
- It was recommended that a Committee of Management be appointed to oversee the sporting and recreational aspects of the Reserve.
- Feedback highlighted the importance of maintaining on-reserve parking, perimeter parking for football, and future-proofing the capacity of the Reserve by restricting camping spots.
- The Pony Club highlighted the importance of safe and adequate parking at the current location, exiting onto the Great Ocean Road. The club suffers from a lack of facilities, poor fencing and fields.
- The clubs raised issues in relation to the quality and safety of the playground, noting the line of sight from sporting facilities is not clear.
- Emergency services and disability access at the Reserve needs to be maintained.
- The community raised the possibility of relocating the Apollo Bay Skate Park to the Reserve if the current location in town is not successful.
- The Apollo Bay Agricultural Show noted its importance to the welfare of the community, which utilises all aspects of the Reserve throughout the show. The important role the show plays in fundraising for the community was also noted.

