

VARNA PARK IMPROVEMENTS

From: Open Space Planning, Waverley Council.

Subject: Varna Park Improvements Project

Date: 6 December 2019

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Purpose

This consultation report summarises feedback received from the Varna Park community consultation undertaken in October and November 2019. The findings of the consultation will help guide the proposed improvements to the park.

Background

In 2019, Waverley Council received funding from the NSW Government through the Stronger Communities Fund for a value of \$280,000 to improve Varna Park. Council will use part of this funding to make necessary improvements across the park to bring it into-line with the latest Australia Standards for safety and ensure it is fit for purpose. Improvement works identified by council include:

- A new picnic shelter to replace the existing picnic shelter which has reached the end of its useful life.
- A new drinking fountain to replace the old drinking fountain
- New rubber softfall pads below play equipment to improve safety
- New edging to the softfall mulch around the playground
- New bin enclosures with dog bag dispensers
- Removal of old seats which have reached the end of their useful life
- Removal and pruning of any un-healthy trees in the park

After accounting for the above listed works approximately \$180,000 of remaining funds will be allocated to further enhance the use and enjoyment of the park. As a condition of this funding a council motion was passed requiring council officers to undertake community consultation to determine how the remaining funding should be allocated and receive feedback on the suggested improvement works listed above.

Consultation Methodology

Community consultation was conducted from 17 October – 8 November 2019. The community were engaged through a range of engagement methods during the consultation period. A summary of engagement methods are tabled below:

Method	Overview	Date	Response
Have your say website	Council's 'Have your say' website currently hosts the Varna Park Improvements project page. It is a place for community members to access project information, progress updates and participate in the online idea's boards and survey.	Thursday 17 October (the project page was published online)	Total visits during this consultation: 589
Flyer drop to residents	Approximately 2000 flyers were delivered to residents within a 500m radius of the park. The	Monday 21 October	2000 flyers

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within a 500m radius of the park	flyer included information about the project, a link to the project page and encouraged people to participate in the community consultation.		
Social media posts on Facebook	A Facebook post was posted on Council's Facebook page containing project information, consultation dates, how people could get involved and a direct link to the project page.	Wednesday 23 October	Reach: 2703
Engagement Newsletter	Waverley Council's monthly engagement newsletter was sent out at the start of the consultation period. The newsletter alerted people to the new project and invited them to share their ideas and participate in the consultation.	Thursday 17 October	Reach: Over 1800
Stakeholder emails	The Open Space Team sent an email to stakeholders (Bronte Bowling Club, Bronte Greenwood Child Care, Clovelly Public School and St Catherine's School) at the start of community consultation informing them of the new project and inviting them to contribute to the consultation.	Thursday 17 October	4 key stakeholders
Online Ideas Board	Found on Council's Have your say website, an online ideas board was set-up allowing community members to contribute their own ideas for how the funding should be spent in the park and vote on their favourite ideas.	Thursday 17 October – Friday 8 November	34 Ideas were contributed 157 Votes 58 Comments were shared
Online Survey	Found on Council's Have your say website, the survey provided an opportunity for people to express any further feedback regarding the park or the planned improvement works.	Thursday 17 October – Friday 8 November	8 submissions
Email submissions from residents	Residents were also invited to contact Council's Open Space Team for further information and to provide direct feedback. The Open Space Team received 1 direct email from a resident regarding ideas for Varna Park.	Tuesday 22 October	1 Email from resident
Phone consultation	Phone consultation with Clovelly Public School's Principle was conducted to make sure the School was engaged with the consultation and that the school was given the opportunity to provide suggestions.	Tuesday 12 November	
Clovelly Public School Newsletter	Clovelly Public School included a message in their school newsletter about the project and a link to Council's <i>have your say website</i> encouraging the school community to get involved in the consultation and share their ideas.	Wednesday 23 October	

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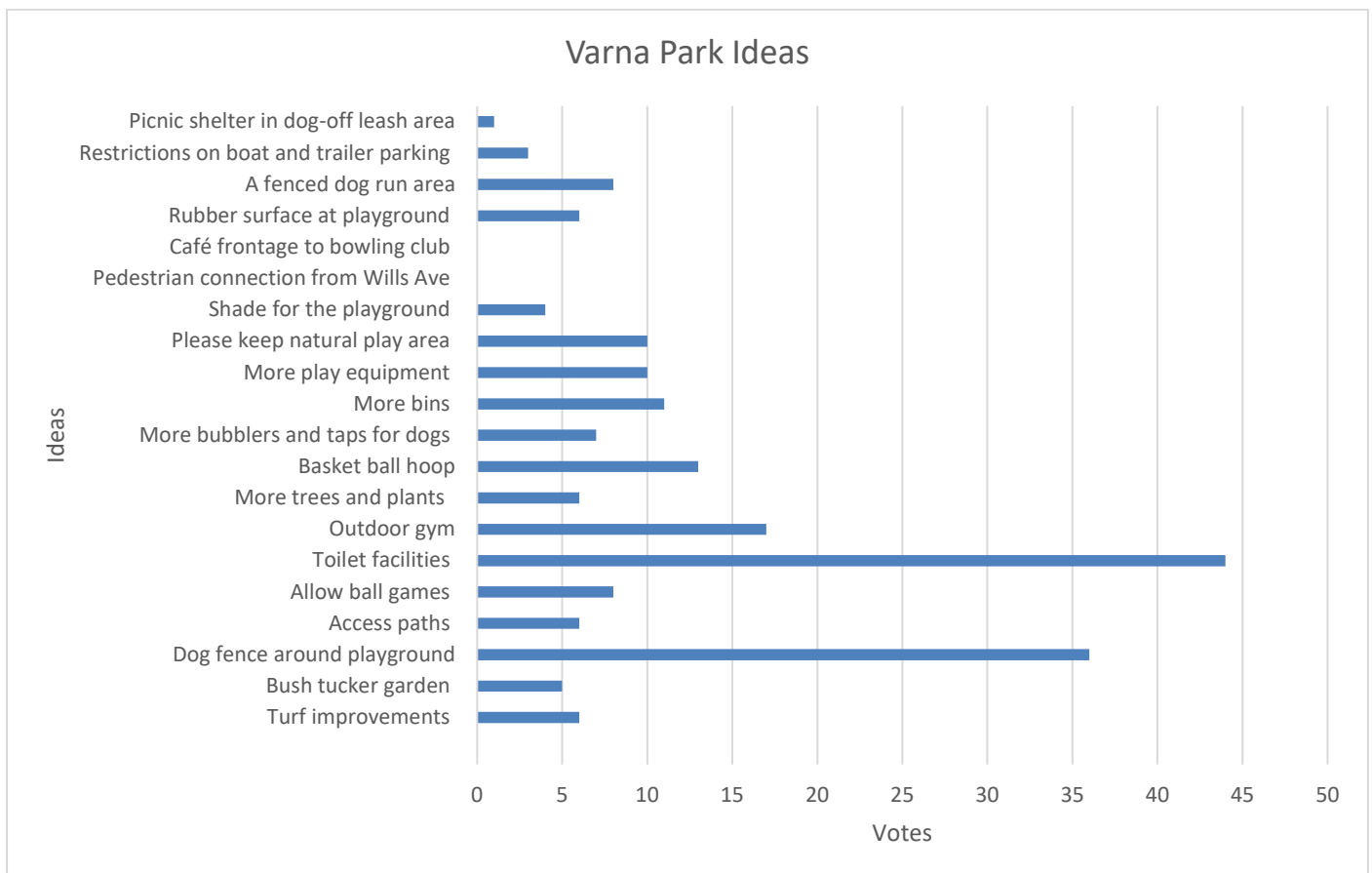
Data overview

The online idea's board and survey were hosted on Council's engagement website haveyoursay.waverley.nsw.gov.au. People could also contribute by sending an email to the open space team.

- 34 Ideas were generated on-line
- 157 online votes were recorded
- 34 comments were left on the ideas board
- 8 people contributed to the survey by providing further feedback
- 1 person sent an email with their ideas for the park

Results

Ideas generated were voted on by the community, the table below illustrates the number of votes each idea received during the consultation period – votes came from the idea's board, the further feedback survey and email:



Discussion

In this section the most popular ideas generated from the idea's board and feedback received from the additional comments tool and survey are summarised into common themes. Each theme is accompanied by recommendations for park improvements dependent on the following criteria:

1. Support for nominated idea
2. The available budget
3. The practicality of implementing, including on-going management and maintenance costs
4. The value and benefits it would provide the community

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Toilet Facilities

Installing toilet facilities at Varna Park received the most votes from participants with 44 votes in total. These people identified the short-fall of public toilets in the area and the benefits of toilets for children using the park including children using the playground and those using the park as part of school activities.

Clovelly Public School said they would like a toilet facility at the park. The School said they use the park regularly for sports classes and activities as they have limited green space within their grounds. They also said the playground is a popular play space for their students after school. They said toilet facilities would greatly improve the park as they could use the park for longer periods of time and more easily.

There were also comments made against installing public toilet facilities at the park. A total of 8 comments were made from the community who were not supportive of this idea, these people expressed concern that toilets would attract anti-social behaviour and that a toilet block would not be in-keeping with the parks 'local feel'.

Recommendations:

- Council has investigated the costs associated with installing toilet facilities at the park. It is estimated that installing a basic toilet facility fit for purpose could cost in excess of \$300,000. The cost of installing toilets at the park exceeds the funds available and is therefore not feasible as part of this project.
- High on-going maintenance costs including cleaning, security, and operational management is also not within budget for this project.
- Council's Draft Open Space and Recreation Strategy does not identify Varna Park as a high priority location for additional toilet facilities in the LGA.

Fence Around Playground

A fence around the playground was voted the second most popular idea during community consultation with a total of 36 people voting for this idea. These people all wanted fencing to improve safety and address the issue of dogs wandering through the play space. There were competing ideas within this group, 10 of 36 people requested a high fence that fully enclosed the playground, while 9 of 36 people requested low fencing, and the remaining 17 people did not specify the type of fencing they preferred.

Recommendations:

- Council has investigated the costs associated with installing both types of fencing:
 - A fully enclosed 800mm high fence around the playground is estimated to cost approximately \$70,000.
 - A 700mm high hooped fence in garden bed around the front of the playground is estimated to cost approximately \$34,000.
- Fencing the playground will help to manage issues of dogs running through the playground.
- Council recommends installing a 700mm high hoop fence in garden bed around the front of the playground with entry gate. This type of fencing has been successful in other locations to manage dogs running through the playground and will have less visual impact than a standard playground palisade fence.
- Council does not recommend a high 900mm fence as it reduces park permeability, encourages unsupervised play and is cost prohibitive.

Exercise Equipment

Exercise equipment was voted the third most popular idea with a total of 17 votes. These people were excited about installing an outdoor gym with a range of exercise equipment pieces. 9 positive comments were also shared by participants about this idea. These people said that they thought it would 'encourage young people to get fit' and that it would be 'a fantastic enhancement of the park'.

2 people expressed concern about the style of the fitness stations and requested the design of the fitness stations to be carried out in a 'sensitive and aesthetic manner'.

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Recommendations:

- Council has investigated the costs associated with installing an outdoor gym at the park. It is estimated that installing fitness equipment and associated facilities could cost approximately \$100,000.
- Waverley's Play Space Strategy identifies a short-fall of recreation for older children, tweens and teenagers in the area. Fitness equipment could cater to a range of ages including children in these age brackets.
- Fitness/ gym-type activities are the second most popular activity in NSW for adults according to new data from The Department of Sport and Recreation. The provision of exercise equipment would appear to be a recreation opportunity that would benefit a wide range of users.

Basketball Hoop

A basketball hoop was voted the third most popular idea with 13 votes. These people said a concrete hardstand and hoop would be a great addition to the park.

Recommendations:

- Council has investigated the costs associated with installing a basketball hoop and hardstand. It is estimated that installing the hoop and concrete hardstand and supporting improvements such as turf levelling around the court would cost approximately \$19,000.
- Waverley's Play Space Strategy identifies a short-fall of recreation for older children, tweens and teenagers in the area. A basketball hoop could cater to a range of ages including children in these age brackets.
- Waverley's Draft Open Space Recreation Strategy identifies an increasing trend towards more casual 'drop in' style active recreation and activities within the LGA. It also recognises a shortfall of 'drop in' casual sports facilities such as basketball half courts. Installing a basketball hoop and hard stand at Varna Park would be in-line with the strategy by supporting this increasingly popular style of active recreation.

More Bins

More bins in the park was voted the fourth most popular idea with 11 votes. These people requested additional bins should be installed in the park including near the playground and in the dog off-leash area. They said there is currently a lack of bins in the park and additional bins might improve the issue of dog owners not picking up after their dogs.

Recommendations:

- Council is already planning to install 2 new bin enclosures as part of the proposed improvement. One of these bins will replace the bin at the Wallace Street and the other will replace the bin opposite the intersection of Leichardt and Barclay Street.
- Council has investigated the operational impact of installing more bins in the park on Council's waste management services. It is recommended that 1 additional bin would be adequate to facilitate the park.
- Council has investigated the cost of installing 1 more additional bin in the park, this will cost approximately \$5000.
- All new bins will have dog bag dispenser attachments with bags for dog owners to encourage them to pick up after their dogs.

More Play Equipment

Requests for more Play Equipment was the fourth most popular idea with 10 votes. There was also an idea requesting council to 'please keep natural play area' at the playground, this idea received 10 votes. People made suggestions for a wide range of different types of play equipment, such as: nature play elements, a slide, climbing wall, monkey bars and more swings. These people all suggested that including more challenging play equipment would be a great improvement to the playground.

Recommendations

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- Varna Park playground was upgraded in 2012 and is identified as a long-term priority in Waverley's Play Space Strategy while Council undertakes more urgent upgrades to play spaces across the LGA as part of priority works outlined in the Play Strategy. It is not recommended to implement a large upgrade of the playground.
- Council has investigated expanding the playground and providing a new nature play area to the East of the playground. Expanding the playground in this direction will take advantage of the existing tree which could be used for imaginative play and climbing. A soft mulch surface would ensure this area is safe and meets Australian Standards.
- Council also recommends re-using the timber from the trees being removed in the park for new nature play items such as stepping logs, balancing beams and a tee-pee.
- Council has investigated the cost of expanding the playground with additional nature play, this will cost approximately \$15,000.

More trees and plants

Requests for more trees and plants in the reserve was popular within the community, with 6 people voting for this idea. 4 people also voted for more shade in the playground. These people recognised the benefits of planting more plants and trees in the park to improve biodiversity and as a way to help shade park users in warmer months.

Recommendations

- Council has investigated the costs of planting more plants and trees in the park, it is estimated to cost \$6,000.
- Council recommends planting new trees around the playground and the new outdoor gym to help shade from the hot Western sun.
- Infill planting and new gardens beds around the playground and outdoor gym will benefit the local biodiversity and will enhance the look and feel of the park.

More bubblers for dogs

Requests for an additional drinking fountain with dog drinking bowl was popular within the community and received 7 votes. These people asked for a bubbler located at both ends of the park. Clovelly Public School also said they would like more drinking fountains in the park to facilitate sports classes and school activities held at the park.

Recommendations

- To eliminate the conflict of dogs using the drinking fountain near the playground, Council recommends installing an additional drinking fountain with a dog drinking bowl in the designated dog off leash area.
- It is expected to cost approximately \$8,000 to install the drinking fountain and associated services.

Dogs off leash issues/ Fenced dog run area

A large number of people said there are compliance issues at the park with dog's off-leash outside of the designated area. These people expressed concerns about dogs being in the playground and said that dogs were disturbing their enjoyment of the park.

An idea for a fenced dog run area was proposed to help manage this issue and received 8 votes. These people said a fenced area for dogs would eliminate issues of dogs off leash outside of the designated area.

Recommendations

- It is not recommended to install a fenced dog run area as this would require installing high fencing in the reserve limiting free open area for all to enjoy. These areas are often intensely used causing severe damage to turf conditions and require high levels of maintenance and up-keep costs to ensure the area is kept sanitary.
- Council recommends installing additional park compliance signs within the park at the edge of the dog off leash area clearly delineating the area.

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- Council has investigated the cost of installing additional signs and garden bed markers, it will cost approximately \$5,000.

Further feedback and ideas

- 1 person said they do not like the proposed picnic shelter and would prefer a shelter with separate sections.
- An idea was posted requesting council to 'allow ball games', this idea received 8 votes. It should be noted that casual ball games are permitted at the park, however, organised ball games without Council's prior permission and that intrude on the enjoyment of the park by others are not allowed.

Improvement Resolution

As there was general support for the proposed improvement works identified by Council and listed in the background section of this report, it is recommended these improvements will be implemented. It is expected that these works will cost approximately \$100,000.

As there was a range of great ideas generated by the community during the consultation period, Council recommends implementing the most popular ideas that best meet the criteria, these ideas include:

- Install a hoop fence in garden bed around the front of the playground (\$41,000)
- Install an outdoor gym (\$100,000)
- Install an additional bin within the reserve (\$5,000)
- Expand the nature play area with additional play elements (\$15,000)
- Install an additional drinking fountain with bog bowl in the dog off-leash area (\$8,000)
- Plant additional shade trees and plants in the park (\$6,000)
- Install additional signage in the park and garden bed delineating the dog off leash area (\$5,000)

These improvements to the reserve are expected to cost the remaining \$180,000 of available funds.

Next Steps

Council will take the following steps:

- The community will be provided with this report and proposed concept plan.
- The community will be given a chance to comment on the outcomes of this consultation and the proposed improvements.