

## Community Consultation Summary -

### Thomas Hogan Reserve Stage 2 Works

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**Subject:** Community Consultation Summary

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## PURPOSE

This Community Consultation Summary has been prepared to document findings of the community consultation of Thomas Hogan Reserve Stage 2 works. Consultation occurred from 21 September 2017 to 20 November 2017 with two on-site 'Have Your Say' days on 8 October 2017 and 12 November 2017. A proposed design walk-through on site with Ward Councillors, residents, and council officers took place on 16 November 2017 following a Council motion at the 7 November Operations and Community Services Committee meeting.

The report details the activities undertaken to ascertain community opinions during this period, provide a summary of the respondent surveys, and Council Officer recommended actions.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The proposed Stage 2 works for Thomas Hogan Reserve continue from the recent successful completion of stage 1 Playground Upgrade works (completed 2016) where most residents said they were happy with the play equipment provided including the recently installed shade structure above the slides. The stage 2 works incorporate the community feedback from stage 1 and enact actions identified in the adopted *Thomas Hogan Reserve Plan of Management (PoM) 2011-2021*.

The addressed actions from the PoM include:

- E2 - Identify trees that are in decline or damaged, assess for safety and plan for replacement
- E3 - Develop a planting plan to increase the feeding habitat of birds
- E9 - Maintain tree canopy to allow solar access to grass clearing and new plantings
- C2 - Investigate the development of a unique lighting strategy for safety and enhancement.
- A9 - Investigate improvements to drainage at low point near Hall
- A10 - Investigate installation of equal access path/ramp from Francis St to Hall
- A11 Investigate the construction of a path where there is erosion between central clearing and playground. The concept plan set out on page 31 of the PoM also gives a directive to assess the line of Camphor laurels in the centre of the lawn.

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Community comments collated during consultation of previous stages and the PoM have informed Council Officers when designing the proposed Stage 2 works. The works proposed predominantly focus on the area surrounding the Community Hall, with the primary aim of creating universal access (DDA compliance) to the Hall and surrounding landscape. Secondary objectives are to reduce the impact of localised flooding around the hall, and to address trees with risks identified by an independent arborist.

Thomas Hogan Reserve Stage 2 Works propose to:

1. Provide universal access infrastructure to allow users with limited mobility to equitably access the hall and surrounding landscape, including access into the community hall, and into the central lawn space.
2. Relocate existing seats for universal access from the new access path.
3. Upgrade furniture to align with the standard furniture suite guided by the *Public Domain Technical Manual* (PDTM).
4. Install 'wet' garden beds to capture, retain, and infiltrate localised flooding to mitigate potential flood damage to the hall and surrounding properties.
5. Improve and increase the functionality of the open space in front of the community hall by providing a larger useable outdoor space including a level paved or decked area, new turf and planting, and new seating.
6. Removal of 13 trees, 12 of which have been identified for removal in the VMP, to provide better solar access to the central turf areas, and allowing the historic fig to achieve its full potential.

The work noted above is proposed to be completed in the 2018-19 financial year, with construction works programmed to start in Autumn 2018.

### **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (VMP)**

The VMP is related to numerous adopted Waverley Council policies and strategies, and is the direct response of multiple actions identified in the adopted Thomas Hogan Plan of Management 2011-2021.

- E2 - Identify trees that are in decline or damaged, assess for safety and plan for replacement
- E3 - Develop a planting plan to increase the feeding habitat of birds
- E5 - Develop a vision for a Bird Sanctuary
- E6 - Develop a long term rainforest planting plan
- E7 - Investigate developing a long term weed management programme
- E8 - Investigate slope stabilisation through weed removal and replanting
- E9 - Maintain tree canopy to allow solar access to grass clearing and new plantings
- E12 - Investigate the establishment of a Biodiversity Corridor

The VMP has been prepared for Waverley Council

- To assist in Council's long-term management in providing public recreational spaces to meet the expectation of the community;
- Conserve, enhance and re-establish a diverse native vegetation structure in the park;
- Conserve and enhance the plantings of likely heritage significance; and
- Establish a long-term, ecologically diverse native viable which:
  - Contains and continually reduces weeds in the park.

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- Maintains and enhances slope stability.
- Creates high quality habitat for a wide range of avian species.

The VMP's ultimate vision is to create a diverse flora and fauna habitat, and establish a reserve on the biodiversity corridor connected to the eastern suburbs network.

### **Relation to current works:**

The current works propose the removal of 13 trees from the reserve based on the recommendations provided by the VMP and the arborist's assessment. The VMP is a technical supporting document which will inform the ongoing maintenance of the reserve over the next couple decades.

### **Discussion:**

The VMP is a long and detailed technical document written by specialists in ecological restoration. Interpretation of the information contained within the VMP requires experience in the field. Technical documents are rarely released to the community due to their complex nature and potential for misinterpretation. A summary of the VMP and its relationship to the proposed works was published as an information sheet for interested parties, however a GIPA request, followed by a Council motion made the VMP a public document.

The current works proposes to remove 13 trees, the community misinterpreted information in the VMP and assumed 150 trees were being removed, leading to a strong objection to the works from some members of the community.

The VMP also does not provide a clear timeline in the restoration works, leading to another misinterpretation of the trees being removed immediately.

### **Recommendations:**

Council officers recommend the VMP:

- Be peer reviewed, with consideration of letters of objection commissioned by community members (prepared by an independent arborist and an environmental planner).
- Be used as a basis for the development of a staged Ecological Restoration Action Plan (ERAP), to be presented to Council for adoption and implementation.

## CONSULTATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The community were engaged through Council's consultation and engagement website, *Have Your Say Waverley*, on-site *Have Your Say* days, and via direct communication methods (email and phone).`

The consultation period was from the 21 September until 20 November, a duration of 60 days. This far exceeds the consultation period for a similar scale park upgrade. Within this period, council officers hosted two onsite HYS days, and a design walkthrough with Ward Councillors and Residents.

The proposed concept plans and supporting information were available for download on Council's webpage. Council officers also organised for posters of the design and Camphor Laurel information sheets to be placed in the Community Hall and within the park.

The table below gives a timeline of the consultation process:

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Date	Description
April 2017 – September 2017	Thomas Hogan Reserve Stage 2 Concept was developed for community consultation. Works are around the community hall and central lawn area, works identified the removal of trees based on recommendations of the VMP.
21 Sept 2017	Have Your Say survey opened and commencement of social media ads. Concept design available online.
28 Sept 2017	Onsite floor decals installed advertising Have Your Say.
28 Sept 2017	Email to Ward Councillors informing of concept design and consultation activity.
29 Sept 2017	Pamphlet distribution to local community (3000 households) advertising Have Your Say Day
6 Oct 2017	Email to Mayor and Dep. Mayor regarding trees, VMP, and community consultation.
6 Oct 2017	Additional onsite signs installed at entries to park.
8 Oct 2017	Have Your Say Day onsite. Just under 20 people were spoken to, and 12 paper surveys were completed.
8 Oct 2017	Camphor Laurel information sheets up on Community Hall noticeboard.
12 Oct 2017	GIPA request for VMP.
12 Oct 2017	VMP to go to Nov Operation Committee.
17 Oct 2017	VMP requested via GIPA.
18 Oct 2017	Community Consultation extended until 20 November 2017.
22 Oct 2017	Interim survey summary shows 42 responses, with marginal majority supporting removal and management of trees (13 trees removed in proposed stage).
28 Oct 2017	Onsite signage updated at entries to park informing of extension to consultation period.
29 Oct 2017	Onsite floor decals updated to reflect new date.
31 Oct 2017	Email circulated to all respondents informing of extended dates.
2 Nov 2017	Poster for Have Your Say day put up in the Community Hall noticeboard.
7 Nov 2017	Pamphlet distribution to local community (3000 households) advertising Have Your Say Day.
7 Nov 2017	Operations Committee agenda item for VMP.
10 Nov 2017	Additional signage with proposed design placed at every public entrance to the reserve, at the community hall, and at the termination of the concrete maintenance driveway.
12 Nov 2017	Second Have Your Say day onsite. Around 30 people were presented with the concept and the issues, and 10 paper surveys were completed.
16 Nov 2017	Additional onsite meeting as decided by Council at Operations and Community Services Committee.
20 Nov 2017	Conclusion of Have Your Say Survey.

### **CONSULTATION EXTENSION PERIOD**

The consultation period described above is an extended version of a typical consultation period for the same scale of upgrade works. The original planned close of consultation was the 22 October, the extended consultation was closed on the 20 November.

Reasons for extension of consultation period include:

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- Interest shown by members of the community on trees to be removed, in particular the rational.
- Inaccurate information being spread in the community regarding the current stage of works.
- Residents alleging they had not received flyers informing them of Have Your Say.

### **PROMOTION AND ADVERTISEMENT**

Council officers used multiple methods of promotion to ensure a large sample size of the community were informed of the proposed upgrades.

Digital promotion of the proposed works and online survey were through Social Media accounts (Facebook and Instagram). With Facebook posts ‘boosted’ to actively target social media users who had ‘liked’ Waverley Council, or had friends that had ‘liked’ Waverley Council.

On-site advertising consisted of corflute posters and floor decals advertising Have Your Say, and corflute signs of the proposed design with additional information. Signs and decals were placed at every entry to the reserve, at the community hall, and in the central lawn area.



Figure 2 - Signage at Entry, left to right, Concept Plan, HYS Advertisement, Vinyl Floor Decal



Figure 1 - Signage at Central Lawn (Community Hall behind)



Figure 3 - Vinyl Floor Decal

A traditional flyer letterbox distribution to local residents within a 500m radius of the reserve (refer appendix D) was commissioned twice. A total of 3000 households would have received the flyers on 29 September and 7 November. It was noted that one property (8-10 Ocean Street) was inaccessible during the distribution.

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Additionally, the community consultation HYS day had a mention in the Mayoral Column in the Wentworth Courier in the 4 October edition, a follow up thank you on the 11 October, and an update informing of extended consultation in 8 November edition.

### **HAVE YOUR SAY DAYS**

*Have Your Say* days took place onsite on 8 October, 12 November, and a walk through and information session on 16 November. Panels of the proposed concept plans and supporting information (refer appendices A, B and D) were on display for community members to peruse. Council officers were on site to discuss the proposal, answer questions and to record feedback. Hard copies of the online survey were available for community members to complete and return.



## CONSULTATION FEEDBACK SUMMARY

### Responses Overview

Council’s *Have Your Say* webpage received 648 total visits, 144 of those visitors had downloaded documents containing information in relation to the Thomas Hogan Reserve Upgrade, and only 96 of the total visitors had decided to provide an online survey response. In addition to the online survey, Council officers accepted 12 paper surveys on the first HYS day on 8 October 2017, 10 at the subsequent HYS day conducted on 12 November 2017, and 6 emails with commentary on the proposed works. A total of 118 survey responses were received. (Refer Appendix E).

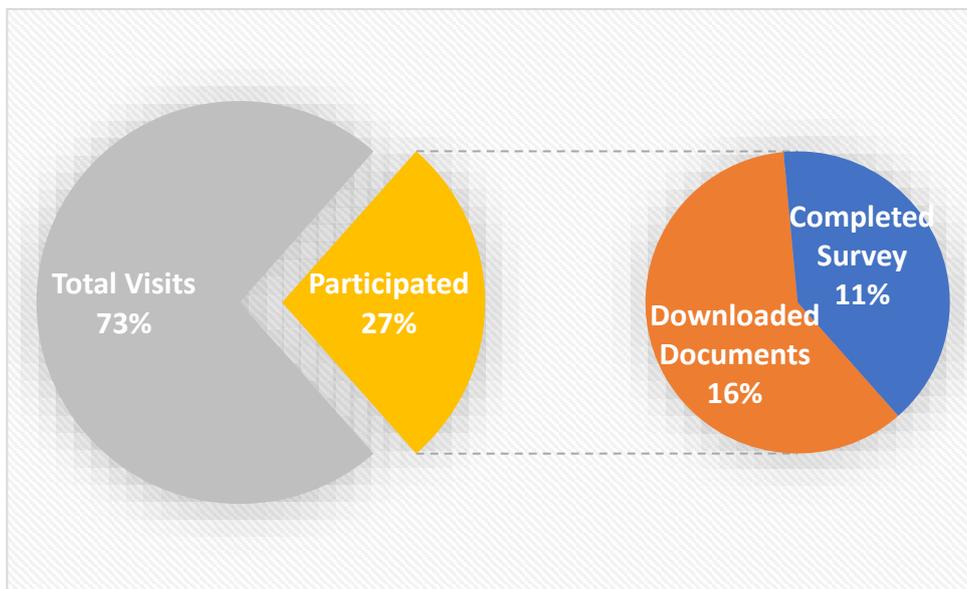


Figure 4 - Participation level of the community

There were a large number of visitors that had downloaded the documents but chose not to participate in the survey. These visitors should be considered as community members that had developed no opinion of or had passively agreed to the proposed upgrade works.

Of those that chose to respond, 23% had provided no additional comments for opposing all the proposed works.

Council Officers should explore ways to encourage more engaged responses and seek methods in obtaining the opinion of the entire community, especially the silent informed majority (those that had downloaded information, but did not participate).



Figure 5 - HYS webpage visit analytics

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### **Demographics and Users**

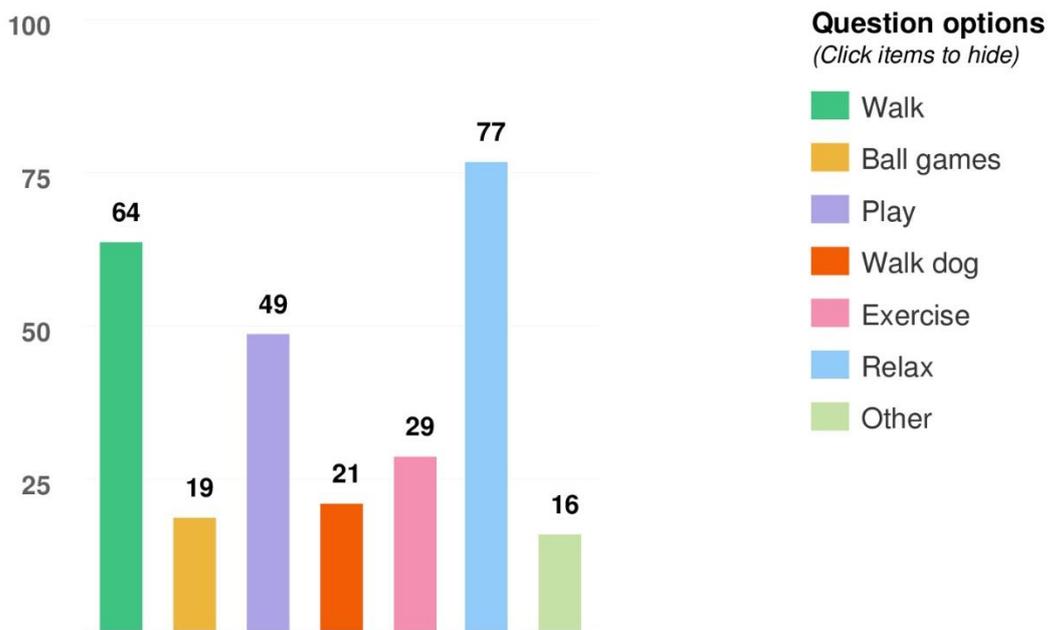
The consultation survey results show respondents mostly walk to the reserve, 84.6% walking compared to 9.4% driving or 5.2% using other modes of transport.

The survey also reveals the reserve is used quite frequently, with 76.7% of respondents visiting the reserve either weekly or daily. Respondents tended to stay for longer periods, with 56.6% of respondents staying longer than an hour, and 32.2% staying longer than 30 minutes.

The age of respondents can be used to assist in the design of the park for current and future needs.

67% of respondents visited with children with most (41 users) having kids in the age group 2-5 years of age.

Low intensity or passive activities were the most common at the reserve. These are, in order of popularity, relaxing (77 users), walking (64 users) and playing (49 users). Other popular activities are exercise, dog walking, and ball games.

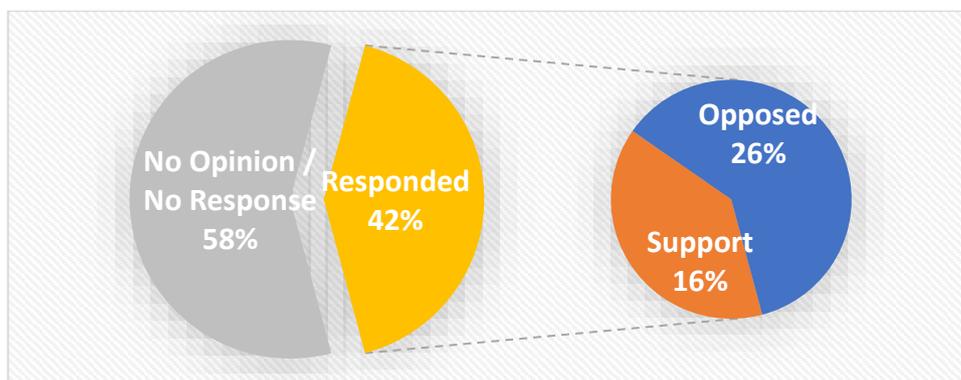


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### Overall Design

There was majority opposition to the overall design proposed, as shown in *Figure 5*, 26% respondents did not support the proposed work. A breakdown of each proposed element reveals the extent to which the design is supported. The council officers will amend the design to address the issues raised by the respondents.



*Figure 6 - Response to overall design*

Generally, comments relating to the overall design from respondents discussed the merits of the upgrade due to the removal of trees, and the inclusion of hard paved surfaces. The general opposition of the upgrade stemmed from a fear the space will become either denuded of trees or a concrete hard paved surface. Comments from respondents include:

- “leave it as natural as possible”
- “I feel this beautiful sanctuary is in danger of being too sanitised, it's a fabulous wild space.”
- “Nature is far more beautiful when left to thrive without excessive human imposition.”
- “Nature.....not more concrete & paving.”

Those that supported the upgrade believed work was needed in the reserve, understood the need to manage the trees, and would like the improvements for better universal access. Comments from respondents include:

- “It is wonderful to see the improvements[sic] generally”
- “While generally the upgrades identified are clearly required, it would be good to see Council integrate much needed attention to the ecological needs of the park into the upgrades also.”
- “Better sun access, new turf, and new seating would make it a better place to relax on a Sunday afternoon or have a picnic with friends”

### Central Lawn Path

The proposed design has a new access path connecting the access from the playground and Francis St to the base of the stairs at Martins Avenue. A key concern raised by the respondents was the extent of concrete works proposed and the consequent loss of green space. Respondents cited the universal access path into the central lawn area as unnecessary hard paving that would not address the worn turf or desire-lines created by users.

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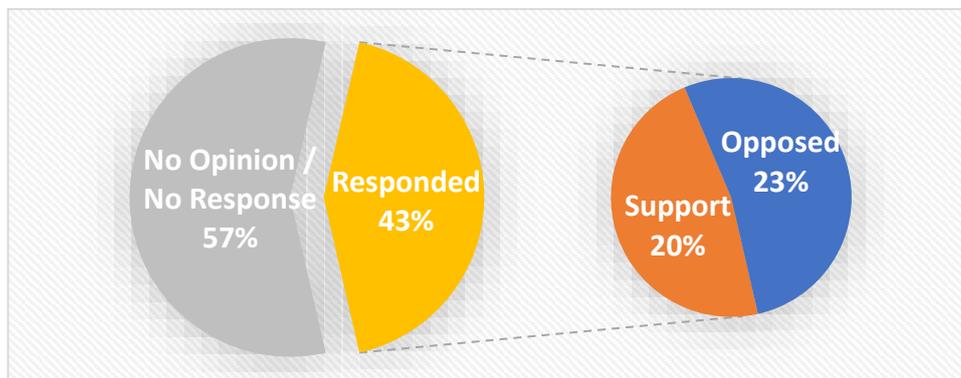


Figure 7 - Response to Central Lawn Path

There is marginal opposition to the proposed design of the path providing universal access to the central lawn area and connecting the Francis St paved paths to the Martins Ave stair.

Rationale for the opposition of the pathway can be ascertained in the comments provided in the survey. These include:

- “The footpath plan going from martin's Ave stairs to the stage 1 stairs will spoil the open space. Could it be wound around the sides?”
- “I feel the path bisecting the park is at odds with keeping this a unique, green space in Bondi.”
- “The path needs to go directly across the central space”
- “I think the creation of this paved pathway is unnecessary and reduces the rustic nature of the park.”

To address the community concerns in relation to the path, Council Officers will:

- Amend the design in consideration of alternative materials (currently shown as concrete).
- Amend the alignment to balance the need of direct access and extent of central lawn of the path to the Martin’s avenue stairs.
- Consider removal of the provision of a specific Council maintenance parking bay to reduce proposed hard paving.

### **Community Hall Path and Access**

The proposed design delivers on Council’s obligation to provide universal access into the Community Hall. The existing path is proposed to be upgraded to meet Australian Standards, and to allow users to navigate the level changes into the Community Hall (currently non-compliant stairs, based on the National Construction Code).

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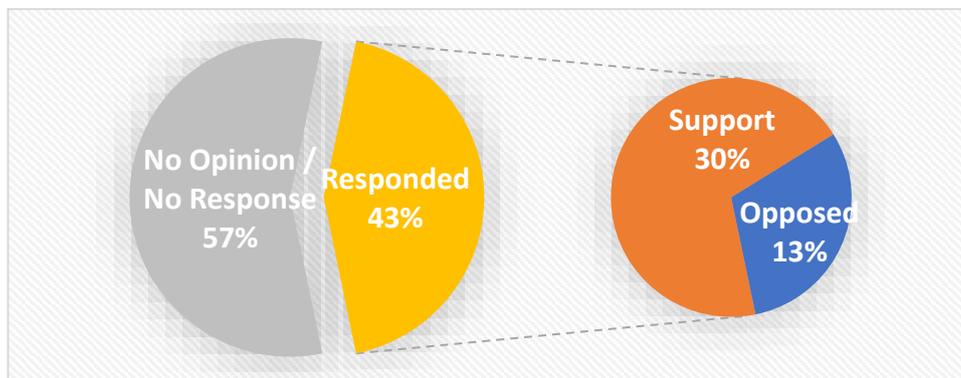


Figure 8 - Response to Community Hall path and access upgrade

There is a strong majority support for the proposed improvements for universal access to the Community Hall. When analysing the comments of, the main concern with this improvement is the materiality and impact concrete will have on the space.

Comments in relation to the path and access upgrade to the community hall provide little reasoning for their opposition or made all design encompassing comments. Some of the comments received include:

- “The path to the hall shouldn't be removed and a new one built it is perfectly fine. Just put in a ramp at the end if necessary.”
- “Don't fix whats[sic] not broken....Absolutely No, no to the new design”
- “Because your[sic] bored after you didn't get amalgamated”

To address the community concerns in relation to the community hall path and access, Council Officers will:

- Investigate alternative materials for the proposed universal access path and access ramp to the Community Hall.

### **Community Hall Landscape Upgrade & Flood Mitigation**

The reserve is subject to localised inundation after storm events, this flooding occurs mostly around the access path to the Community Hall. The proposed design introduces ‘wet’ garden beds to retain and help with ground infiltration.

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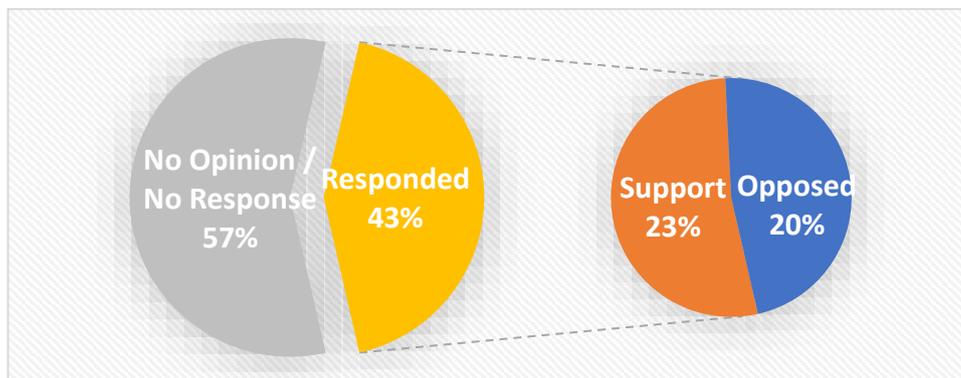


Figure 9 - Response to Community Hall landscape upgrade

There is marginal support from those that had responded.

Of those that had opposed, the general concerns were:

- Excess lawn in a 'nature' reserve.
- Hard paved area to the front of the hall.
- Non-native planting.

Additional comments provided by residents in relation to general upgrades were:

- Request for additional public toilets / access to toilets in the community hall, more seating than has been proposed, and barbeques.
- Dogs on leash signage in the lower part of the reserve and dog litter bins.
- Water bubbler in the central area.

To address the community concerns, Council Officers will:

- Provide a planting list in accordance with the VMP, consisting of all natives endemic to the ecological class.
- Amend the design to reconsider the extent of lawn and garden bed.

### ***Tree management***

The proposed design includes the removal of 13 trees on the periphery of the central lawn area. These trees are predominantly Camphor laurels, a species recognised as an environmental weed.

As discussed in relation to the VMP, Council officers had commissioned a report to ascertain professional assessment of the health of the trees. The report identified the trees had varying health issues and recommended removal of the trees.

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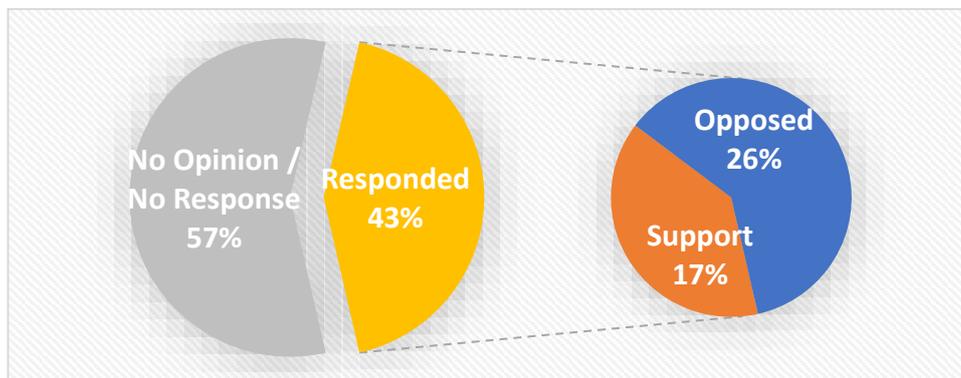


Figure 10 - Response to tree management

The respondents are strongly opposed to the management of the trees, in particular the removal of trees. However, Council is required to address the safety issue these trees pose, as identified in the expert certified arborist report.

Of the trees proposed for removal, only one is deemed an imminent safety risk, with a potential failure within five years. Ten of the other trees have varying symptoms showing stress or ill-health, and have been recommended for removal as they are likely to fail within five to ten years.

Respondents provided additional insight in their opposition in their comments:

- “No cutting down any trees as they are as indigenous as most of us.”
- “Tree change should happen over time so as not to spoil ecosystem.”
- “Leave all of the trees alone and stop the destruction of over 150 trees!”
- “It is a nature reserve, please retain the trees and leave it as natural as possible.”
- “Please do not cut down our healthy mature camphor laurels or other healthy trees.”
- “Interfering with it will disturb the ecosystem, and destroy the wild beauty and unique quality of the reserve.”

The respondents who supported the tree management and removal mentioned the improved solar access for turf, understood the aims of Council, and requested more natives to replace the trees being removed. Comments include:

- “I support removing the trees, as the grass doesn't grow very well, probably because there isn't enough sunlight.”
- “It would be good to be able to see the historic fig grow to its full potential”
- “I support the tree removal but plant more natives”
- “Please replace removed trees with natives.”

These concerns generally revolve around the perception that the design proposed is removing all the trees in the reserve in one stage. These concerns are unfounded, as the current works only propose the removal of 13 trees, 11 of which have been identified as a safety risk.

Additionally, Camphor laurels if left unmanaged would create a mono-species ecology removing the diversity currently witnessed in the reserve. The planned future ecological restoration of the reserve would increase diversity for flora and fauna, addressing the concerns of the respondents.

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To address the community concerns, Council Officers will:

- Consider commissioning another certified arborist to provide advice based on the review of the existing assessment, and community provided arborist letter of objection.
- Proceed with the removal of trees deemed hazardous and a risk to public safety.
- Amend concept to include locations of replacement trees and specify native species.
- Minimise tree removal in this stage of works.
- Commission an Ecological Restoration Action Plan by specialist ecologist to guide the ecological restoration works.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- This Community Consultation Summary will be presented to Council.
- Upon noting this report and adopting Council officer recommendations, Council officers will proceed to amend the design plans and commence documentation of the works.
- An amended design, based on the Council motion, will be circulated to all Councillors and all respondents that had provided contact details.
- If required, a Development Application will be lodged to gain approval for the removal of trees in accordance with the Waverley Council Local Environmental Plan 2012.
- Engage specialist ecologist consultant to prepare a staged Ecological Restoration Action Plan based on reviews of the VMP, and Community provided Letters of Objection from Environmental Planner and Arborist.

### **APPENDICES**

- Appendix A – Concept sheets, Project Timeline & community comments up to 9.11.2017
- Appendix B – Information sheet on Camphor Laurels from NSW Weedwise
- Appendix C – Information sheet for Vegetation Management
- Appendix D – Letterbox drop area – 500m radius