

#### 5.5 Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan

**Director/Executive Manager:** Director Infrastructure & Environment

**Report Author:** Open Space Planner

In Attendance: Coordinator Open Space Planning

#### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of the report is to:

- Provide an update on the outcomes of the community consultation for draft Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan;
- Seek endorsement of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan for implementation.
- As part of the Alexander Avenue Town Centre revitalisation, the need for a master plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve was identified to meet community needs.
- Engagement with the community and key stakeholders was undertaken which identified a desire for a safer, vibrant, and activated open space.
- Consultation and engagement for the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan has now concluded, and changes have been made to the final document for endorsement.
- The master plan guides and provides direction for future upgrades and improvements to Nick Ascenzo Reserve. The master plan responds to ageing infrastructure, safety concerns, connectivity and community needs along with recommendations to improve the natural environment.

#### Officers' Recommendation

#### **THAT Council:**

- 1. Endorse the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan.
- 2. Note the draft master plan has been revised to reflect the community feedback.
- 3. Note the funding for the implementation of master plan actions will be subject to Capital works program budget considerations in future years.
- 4. Thank all submitters to the master plan for their contribution.



#### **Background / Key Information**

- Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified in the City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy as a Municipal Open Space Reserve. The Open Space Strategy recommends "Preparation of a Landscape Masterplan to guide future upgrades and use of this park for structured and unstructured sport and recreation use. This review is to consider the car parking facility location (including the play area); improving the connection between the adjoining shopping precinct and the park; and improving visual access into the park through trimming selected vegetation."
- Nick Ascenzo Reserve is situated in Thomastown in the southwest of the municipality. Thomastown is approximately 15 square kilometres in size. Although known as a residential area, it has a significant industrial area. Thomastown is bordered by Merri Creek in the west and Darebin Creek in the east. Thomastown has a shortage of open space with Nick Ascenzo Reserve being the only park in this area.
- Key data for Thomastown include:
  - o 20,234 residents in 2021
  - o 42.1% of households are couples with children
  - o 35.4% of households are couples without children
  - o 27.5% of Population are 60+ years of age
  - o 27% of Population are less than 25 years of age
  - o Median age is 39
  - 56.4% were born overseas
  - o 71.8% Speak a language other than English at home
  - o 7.02% canopy cover (Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy, 2020-2040)
  - 23 square meters provision of usable (unencumbered) open space per resident
     (2023)
  - 17 square meter projected provision of usable open space per resident (projected population 2041)
- In May 2021, the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group organised a meeting with Council officers, Thomastown East Primary School, and local shop owners to address safety concerns around the Alexander Avenue precinct including around the school, public toilets, and shops. Consultation on the Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework also received considerable feedback on Nick Ascenzo Reserve.
- Nick Ascenzo Reserve is a major open space north of the Metropolitan Ring Road between High Street and Dalton Road. The reserve is the largest informal recreation open space in Thomastown (no formal organised sport), with an area of approximately 3.5 hectares which is characterised by open grass surrounded by garden beds and mature trees offset from the reserve boundaries. The reserve comprises facilities including playground, rock climbing wall, bocce rink, half basketball court, table tennis, picnic facilities, public toilet, car parking, football and soccer goals, community hall and scout hall. Infrastructure in the park is aging, and in some cases inadequate.



- A 60m transmission easement runs through the reserve, dividing the site into two
  parts physically and visually. This creates a major design and use constraint and
  prohibits the central lawn for structured sport, however there is an opportunity to
  have informal activities.
- The Master Plan will provide the City of Whittlesea with a vision, objectives, recommendations, and prioritisation for future development over the next 5 to 10 years. As a Municipal Open Space, the reserve will be improved to augment connections with the streetscape, town centre and neighbourhood, and meet community needs.
- The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Masterplan and recommendations will be adaptative to the Community Infrastructure Plan when finalised.

#### The vision of the draft Master Plan is:

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is an inclusive and distinctive park that provides a range of recreation, informal sport, and social opportunities for all people to enjoy whilst enhancing the natural values of the park. It provides an environment that is accessible, well-connected, attractive and sustainably managed.

#### The objectives are:

- Establish a well-maintained reserve;
- Invite and inspire people of all ages and abilities;
- Promote and facilitate social community use and events;
- Upgrade informal sporting infrastructure and community facilities;
- Promote environmental sustainability and landscape character;
- Provide clear sight lines across the reserve and activate during night and day to improve perceptions of safety in the area;
- Provide well-defined, safe, and accessible connections within the reserve and the Alexander Avenue shops and Thomastown East Primary School.

The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan sets out recommendations which are articulated through the key themes of Movement and Access, Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure, and Environment and Landscape (Attachment 1) will achieve the following outcomes for the community.

#### **Movement and Access:**

**Enhanced Accessibility:** The realigned and upgraded circuit path, along with the proposed concrete footpath, will make the park more accessible to a wider range of community members, including those with mobility challenges.



**Improved Entrance Experience**: Upgraded entrances with signage, lighting, and landscaping will create a more welcoming and aesthetically pleasing entrance, enhancing the park's overall appeal.

**Better Parking Facilities**: The proposed footpath from Boronia Street to the carpark and the upgraded car park with a water-sensitive approach will not only enhance access to the park but also prioritise safety and sustainability

#### **Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure:**

**Versatile Recreational Space:** The proposed running loop, nature play, fitness stations, scooter/skate and multi-purpose court will provide a versatile recreational space that caters to a wide range of activities at different times, serving as a vibrant hub for school groups and individuals.

**Diverse Play Experiences:** The proposed playground with nature-based play elements and the scooter, skate, and BMX loop will provide a range of recreational options for children and teenagers, promoting active and creative play.

**Fitness and Exercise Opportunities:** The multi-purpose court and fitness/exercise station will encourage physical activity, promoting a healthier lifestyle within the community.

**Community Spaces:** The flexible central lawn, expanded picnic area, outdoor gathering spaces and plaza space will serve as venues for community events, picnics, and social gatherings, fostering a sense of community.

#### **Environment and Landscape:**

**Improved Biodiversity:** Planting additional trees and low-maintenance garden beds will enhance the park's ecological diversity and sustainability.

**Enhanced Safety and Aesthetics:** Thinning out overgrown understory planting, improving lighting, and removing certain trees will create a more visually appealing and safer environment.

**Shade and Comfort:** More canopy cover around the play space and walking track will provide shade, making the park more comfortable for outdoor activities during hot weather. Refer to Appendix 1 (Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan Report) for more details on specific actions.



### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

Feedback from the community and stakeholders have informed the development of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan. The engagement comprised of two phases (Refer to Attachment 2 - Engagement Summary Report):

- a) Phase one, Information Gathering,
- b) Phase Two, Draft Master Plan Exhibition.

The second phase of consultation was undertaken between the 19th of May 2023 to the 25th of June 2023 and involved engaging the broader community through pop-up sessions and on Council's digital engagement platform. The purpose of this engagement was to receive community feedback on the Draft Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan and key recommendations, and their preferred priority upgrades to ensure that the future of the reserve reflects our community's needs. Council officers continued engagement with key stakeholders during phase two consultation.

The project engage page received 268 visitors with 33 community members providing feedback or completing the survey during the consultation period.

Council Officers spoke with a further 14 people across the two community pop-ups, and had separate workshops with Alexander Avenue Shop Precinct traders and the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School.

The following stakeholders were consulted.

External stakeholders

- Traders on Alexander Avenue (1:1 conversations)
- Thomastown East Primary School- Principal (In-person meeting, pop-up consultation and project engage page)
- Community Activity Centre Users (Pop-up consultation)
- Visitors to the Shops (Pop-up consultation)
- Community (Pop-up consultation & project engage page)

There were 33 contributions to the online survey with most respondents supportive of the Master Plan and recommendations.

The following masterplan recommendations have been identified as the communities' top nine priorities for improvement:

- 1. Expand the picnic area to the south-west with new shelter, seating, drinking fountain and bins
- 2. Installation of exercise station
- 3. Investigate potential upgrade to existing toilet block including possible relocation as part of the Community Centre's future upgrade



- 4. New multi-purpose court next to Thomastown Primary School
- 5. Proposed lighting along the path from the bus stop to the community centre and car park
- 6. Expand the play space to include nature-based play
- 7. Upgrade entrances to the park with wayfinding signage, feature paving, lighting, and landscaping
- 8. Improve sightlines into the reserve by thinning out understory planting and replace with low maintenance plants
- 9. Realign and upgrade circuit path with granitic sand

The consultation responses demonstrate the community supports the Master Plan with the inclusion of the below new or amended recommendations:

- Create a new path from the car park to the Community Centre
- Linemark the proposed circuit path with distance markers to allow for running
- Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains and seating, and review waste bins locations around the park
- Incorporate rock climbing elements as part of the playground expansion
- Investigate the development of a new path next to the playground which allows skating, skateboarding, scooter and BMX
- Investigate the development of a water play area in other larger parks in Thomastown or neighbouring suburbs
  - <u>Note:</u> Nick Ascenzo Reserve is limited due to the high voltage powerlines and does not allow for water play and associated infrastructure.
- Investigate increasing the playground surface material from organic mulch to rubber
- Expand the proposed fitness and exercise equipment to allow for different user groups
- Investigate the potential for providing an open unstructured dog off-leash area with the review of the 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan' and 'Open Space Plan'
  - <u>Note</u>: The development of the VR Michael Reserve Master plan includes the investigation of an open unstructured dog off-leash area. VR Michael Reserve is an 8min drive, or 3km walk from Nick Ascenzo Reserve.
- Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the multi-purpose court due to nearby streets
- Incorporate reserve lighting in warm colours at the reserve entrances, and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways
  - <u>Note</u>: Lighting the reserve's internal paths and elements will be further investigated in future with the holistic Public Realm Lighting Plan
- Investigate the traffic calming initiatives at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection near the north east reserve entry



<u>Note</u>: Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection is out of the scope of the project and needs further investigation by the Traffic Team.

The successful implementation of the actions/recommendations outlined in the master plan is contingent upon securing adequate funding and alignment with the priorities of Council's capital works program. In the event of sufficient budgetary allocation, it is anticipated that these actions could commence as early as the next financial year (2024-2025). Refer to financial implications for more information.

#### Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

#### **Connected Communities**

We work to foster and inclusive, healthy, safe and welcoming community where all ways of life are celebrated and supported.

#### **Liveable Neighbourhoods**

Our City is well-planned and beautiful, and our neighbourhoods and town centres are convenient and vibrant places to live, work and play.

Well-planned, accessible open space is proven to have preventative health benefits including opportunities for the community to socially interact and undertake physical activities. The W2040 Liveable Neighbourhoods goal includes an indicator to increase use of open space. Providing additional value in existing open spaces and increased accessibility to these facilities is important to the health of the community.

#### Considerations of Local Government Act (2020) Principles

#### **Environmental**

The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan will contribute to a healthier and more sustainable environment through increased tree canopy cover, biodiversity, and water sensitive urban design.

#### Social, Cultural and Health

The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan will provide opportunities for physical activity, recreation, and relaxation. It can foster a sense of community and provide spaces for residents to come together, leading to improved social cohesion.



#### **Economic**

The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan proposes upgrades to facilities which will assist in activating the Alexander Avenue shops, will attract more people to the local area, enhance passive surveillance, improve perception of safety of the precinct, increase property values, and provide a positive impact on the local economy contributing to economic growth.

### **Financial Implications**

The estimated budget required to implement the complete Master Plan is subject to further design development and market conditions at procurement for design and/or construction. The initial high-level opinions of probable costs estimate the total cost of master plan implementation to be approximately \$3.8m. The inclusion of CPI adjustments over the assumed 10-year life of the master plan estimates overall implementation to be approximately \$4.5m.

Many of the actions and improvements will be subject to further consideration as projects within Council Capital Works programs and Asset Renewal Programs, including the Playground Renewal Program and Greening Whittlesea. Items requiring additional funding will be referred to Council's annual budget process and subject to external grant opportunities.

Of the required \$3.8m of funding, approximately \$820,000 will be funded by existing asset renewal programs.

The operational and maintenance estimate to maintain the fully implemented master plan is \$10,800 p/a, this figure is in addition to maintaining existing elements retained.

#### Other Principles for Consideration as per the Local Government Act (2020)

#### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

- (e) Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued.
- (i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

#### **Public Transparency Principles**

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.



#### **Council Policy Considerations**

#### **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

No Implications

#### Social, Cultural and Health

No Implications

#### **Economic**

No Implications

#### Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No Implications

#### Implementation Strategy

#### Communication

Two phases of the consultation were undertaken as follows:

- 1 to 31 August 2022: Community Engagement Phase one (Information Gathering)
- 19 May 2023 to 25 June 2023: Community Engagement Phase Two (Draft Master Plan Exhibition)

#### **Critical Dates**

21 November 2023: Council meeting

30 November: Closing the loop and providing update to the community with final Master Plan

### **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

#### **Attachments**

- 1. COW Nick Ascenzo Reserve Masterplan with Appendices [5.5.1 83 pages]
- 2. Nick Ascenzo MP Engagement Summary [5.5.2 15 pages]



## Nick Ascenzo Reserve MASTER PLAN REPORT

October 2023

Open Space Planning



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### 1.1 Overview

#### Thomastown

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is situated in Thomastown, in the southwest area of the municipality. Thomastown is approximately 15 square kilometres in size, and although it is known as a residential area, it also has a significant industrial area. Thomastown is surrounded by Merri Creek in the west and Darebin Creek in the east. The Metropolitan Ring Road, Hume Freeway, Edgars Road, High Street and Dalton Roads present barriers to safe walking access to open space within the suburb.

The forecast residential population change in Thomastown represents a 10.3 percent increase in the total population with a forecast increase of approximately 2,183 people by 2026. This is distributed throughout the established residential areas with higher levels of concentration of change around the Neighbourhood Renewal areas east and west of High Street.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ABS) provided information on the demographics, cultural and language diversity of Thomastown. Some of the key information found are as to right (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ABS) 2021):



#### **POPULATION**

**20,234 residents** in 2021

Population density **1,349 persons** per square km

+ 8000 more residents by 2041

27.5% of population are 60+ years of age

27% of population are less than 25 years of age

(The Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)



#### **CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

**56.4%** were born overseas

**71.8%** speak a language other than English at home

(The Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)



#### **URBAN HEAT**

**5-10°C** hotter above the non-urban baseline

(Cooling and greening Melbourne, Urban Heat Data 2018)



#### **FAMILIES**

**42.1%** of households are couples with children

**35.4%** of households are couples without children

**20.1** are one parent family

(The Australian Bureau of Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)



#### **OPEN SPACE AND TREES**

23 square meters provision of usable (unencumbered) open space per resident (2023)

**17 square meters** projected provision of **usable open space** per resident (2041)

Recommended minimum open space provision is **20-25 sqm per resident** 

**7.02%** canopy cover (Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy 2020-2040)

#### Nick Ascenzo Reserve

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is one of the City of Whittlesea's open space reserves in Thomastown, an established area of the municipality. Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified as part of Alexander Avenue Shopping Precinct Improvement Project, which will transform the precinct including, revitalisation of the town centre, neighbourhood open space and includes improvements to traffic management in the precinct.

Phase one the Alexander Avenue Town Centre Revitalisation program was a 2020/21 Council Action Plan, that aims to improve the functionality, attractiveness, and vibrancy of local and neighbourhood town centres across the City of Whittlesea. Phase Two of the precinct revitalisation is Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan development.

The Open Space Strategy 2016 identifies the reserve as one of the most frequently visited open space reserves within walking distance of residents with a peaceful/quiet environment. In terms of the hierarchy and character classification, it is specified as a municipal open space with sporting and service easement as a primary and secondary character.

The Open Space Strategy recommends "Preparation of a Landscape Master plan to guide future upgrades and use of this park for both structured and unstructured sport and recreation use. This review is to consider the car parking facility location (including the play area); improving the connection between the adjoining shopping precinct and the park; and improving visual access into the park through trimming selected vegetation."





Figure 2. Alexander Avenue Precinct



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## 1.2 Purpose of master plan

As per the Open space Strategy, Master Plans are recommended to be prepared when major works are required for State, Regional and Neighbourhood open spaces which have a broader catchment of users and frequently a range of community stakeholder groups such as community organisations and sporting clubs

The purpose of this master plan is to guide the future development and management of Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

#### The masterplan endeavours to:

- Create a safe and inclusive, highly accessible reserve that supports and encourages use by people of all ages and abilities;
- Promote environmental sustainability through ecological conservation and improvement, increased tree canopy cover and water-sensitive urban design;
- Improve community safety through a wellconsidered functional layout as well as adherence to CPTED principles and applying gender-sensitive lens;
- Inform future capital works, as stand-alone projects, or staged with a logically cumulative sequencing;
- Recommend necessary improvements to the reserve to achieve a high-quality landscape setting while protecting and enhancing its existing character.

### 1.3 Project method

The development of the master plan has involved a comprehensive review of background documents as well as extensive engagement with the community and consultation with key external and internal stakeholders. Informed by consultation and site understanding, key recommendations were developed for the overall site. In preparing this report, background research and reviews of existing documents was initially conducted, as summarised below, as well as an analysis of the study area, to build an understanding of the context. The analysis focussed on the study area's existing conditions, current issues and challenges and opportunities to improve the site.

The background analysis and site understanding were expanded by a visit to the study area. The project process then focussed on the Stakeholder/Community Engagement process, which sought inputs from residents and traders, about Alexander Avenue shopping precinct and Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

The purpose of these engagement activities was to gain greater knowledge about the issues, opportunities and priorities for the shopping precinct and Nick Ascenzo Reserve, to form a more detailed brief for the planning work going forward in the project, and to provide the foundations for developing a vision for the Nick Ascenzo Reserve. The Stakeholder Engagement Findings Report can be found in Appendix 1.

In the next stage, the project process focussed on the development of the concept plan for the site. Following this, a second phase of community engagement will take place to gather feedback on the draft master plan.

The diagram illustrates the steps for the project.

#### BACKGROUND REVIEW AND SITE ANALYSIS

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (INFORMATION GATHERING

- Community survey online
- On site pop up consultation

#### **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

#### DRAFT MASTER PLAN

- Vision and objectives
- Master plan recommendations
- Workshop concept design with PWG, PCG and key
- Concept design

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (MASTER PLAN EXHIBITION)**

- On site public exhibition
- Online exhibition
- Distribution to key stakeholders (internal and external)

#### FINAL MASTER PLAN

• Final update to Master Plan to reflect community feedback

#### **COUNCIL ADOPTION OF PLAN**

## 1.4 Study area outline

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified in the City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy as a Municipal Open Space Reserve with a 500m walking catchment in Thomastown. This catchment is limited by The Boulevard and Dalton Road on the north and east side of the site.

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is the major area of open space north of the Metropolitan Ring Road between High Street and Dalton Road. The reserve is the largest informal recreation open space in Thomastown (no formal organised sport), with an area of approximately 3.5 hectares which is generally characterised by open grass area surrounded by garden beds and mature trees offset from the reserve boundaries. The reserve comprises of several facilities including playground, rock climbing wall, bocce rink, half basketball court, table tennis, playground, picnic facilities, public toilet, car parking, footy and soccer goals, community hall and scout hall. Infrastructure in the park is aging, and in some cases inadequate.



Project boundary 500m Walking Catchment

559 Bus Route and Bus Stops 556 Bus Route and Bus Stops

570 Bus Route

and Bus Stops

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## **1.5 Planning controls**

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is located within a Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ), next to Commercial Zone (C1Z), General Residential Zone – Schedule 5 (GRZ5) and Public Use Zone – Education (PUZ2), as presented in Figure 5.

The electricity transmission line with a 60m easement width runs along the middle of the reserve, dividing the site into two parts physically and visually and limits development around this corridor as seen in Figure 6.

According to the flood modelling, this area is not in a floodplain zone, as per Figure 7.





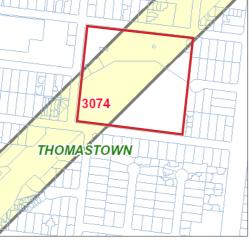




Figure 5. Planning Zone

Figure 6. Transmission Easement

Figure 7. Flood Modelling

## **2.0** Background Documents

Several existing strategic planning documents, policies and strategies have influenced the Nick Ascenzo Master Plan. A review and summary of each including key directions relevant to the park is included in Appendix 1. The documents reviewed are as follows:

#### City of Whittlesea

- Whittlesea 2040 A place for all
- Whittlesea Open Space Strategy 2016
- Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2023
- Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Management Plan 2016–2026
- Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027
- Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028
- Community Plan 2021-2025
- Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041 (Draft)
- Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026
- Play space Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16
- Thriving Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- Spaces 8 to 12+: Creating Engaging Places for Young People 2013-2018
- Greening Whittlesea
- Equal and Safe Strategy 2019
- Disability Action Plan 2017-2021
- Signage Management Plan
- Your Ground Project 2021
- Natural and Built Shade Policy 2016
- Park Lighting Strategy 2006
- Lighting for Shared User paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles, City of Whittlesea -Arup 2022

#### AusNet

- A guide to living with transmission line easements
- AusNet services, Your guide to planting near electricity lines







It is proposed to provide a footpath along

the end of the 90-degree parking spaces for

ease of pedestrian movement to and from

the reserve and shops from these parking

spaces. This footpath should be 2.5m wide

to allow for overhang of the parked vehicles. The existing bollards should be shifted

eastward adjacent to the footpath. This can

near the public toilets to the north, and the

connect into the existing paved footpath

existing footpath on Alexander Avenue.

A kerb ramp should be provided from the

footpath to allow access for those with

accessible parking shared space to the new

## 3.0 Site Analysis and Assessment

## 3.1 Existing conditions

The analysis covers findings categorised into the following themes:

Movement and access

Informal recreation and park infrastructure



Environment and landscape



## 3.1.1 Movement and access

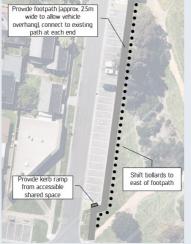
#### Footpath

The study area has relatively good walking facilities in place, with footpaths provided along Waratah Street and Alexander Avenue. There is an informal footpath on the eastern side of Boronia Street along the reserve which is interrupted by the toilet platform and onstreet parking in this street.

There is a combination of formalised and unformalised footpaths in the reserve which provides an oval walking path around the park from the park entrances in the surrounding streets.

A few locations in the study area have been identified to be lacking in pedestrian connection and footpaths. These are along the eastern side of Boronia Street near the car parking area and toward the roundabout intersection with Waratah Street.

Pedestrian and cyclist surveys were conducted by SALT3 in the study area to quantify the movements of active travellers at key locations. SALT3 recommendations for footpaths surrounding the Nick Ascenzo Reserve are as follows:



parking spaces (SALT 3, 2022)

It is proposed to extend the footpath along Boronia Street and provide a barrier kerb with landscaped nature strip along the eastern side of Boronia Street.

mobility devices.

This footpath will connect to the paved area at the car park entrance and community centre and the existing footpath set back within the park slightly.

Furthermore, there is potential to provide a further landscaped nature strip at the frontage of the car park entrance as this area is currently underutilised.



Proposed footpath on the northern section of Boronia Street (SALT 3, 2022)

#### Cycling path

There are no on-road or off-road cycling paths within the study area. In the vicinity of the site, Dalton Road and The Boulevard are provided with on-road bike lanes. The residential nature of many of the streets in and around the study area provides a low-speed and volume environment, suitable for sharing between vehicles and cyclists.

It is noted that Alexander Avenue is recognised as a priority corridor for walking and cycling improvements, within Council's Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027.

#### Public transport

The area is well-serviced by public transport, with bus and train services in the vicinity.

Bus route 559 operates on Alexander Avenue, with a bus stop situated to the south of Nick Ascenzo Reserve. This is a circular bus route throughout Thomastown and provides access to Thomastown Station, Lalor Plaza and Lalor Station. Bus route 570 operates on The Boulevard, with bus stops located near the intersection with Acacia Street. This operates between Thomastown and RMIT Bundoora Campus (refer to Figure 4).

The study area is located in close proximity to Thomastown Railway Station which is situated at the eastern end of Alexander Avenue, approximately 1km (12-minute walk) from the study area. Thomastown Station is on the Mernda train line, between Melbourne CBD and the northern suburbs.

#### Park entrances

There are seven entrances, including two main entrances in the north and southwest corners and five minor entrances. Based on the pedestrian count conducted, the entrances in the north, west, southwest, and the entrance from the internal car park are identified as the primarily used entrances, as per Figure 8. It's recommended to make these entrances more prominent.

The pedestrian count was undertaken at the study area on the following

- Thursday 30 November 2022 between 8am-10am; and
- Friday 2 December 2022 between 3.30pm-6pm.





Figure 8. Pedestrian Count

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#### Att 5.5.1

#### Car parking

Car parking is provided throughout the study area including on-street and off-street provisions. The locations of parking in the Alexander Avenue Precinct is shown in Figure 9.

Parking occupancy surveys were undertaken by SALT3 across the study area at the following days/times:

- Saturday 10 September 2022 between 10am-4pm; and
- Wednesday 14 September 2022 between 8am-9.30am and 3pm-4pm.

From this, the peak hours for parking occupancy are found to be at 9.30am and 3pm on Wednesday, and at 11.30am on Saturday. The parking utilisation across the study area at these times is presented in Figures 10-13.

The total car parking capacity in the precinct is 382 spaces, and according to the parking analysis, it can be concluded that parking is widely available within the precinct with a weekday peak occupancy of 61 spaces (16% occupied) occurring at 3pm, and a weekend peak occupancy of 75 spaces (20% occupied) occurring at 11.30am.

The internal car park capacity is 54 spaces. Peak occupancy of the car spaces is 40% on weekdays and 22% on weekends. This indicates an opportunity to reduce the existing car park spaces.



Figure 9. Car parking in the Alexander Avenue Precinct

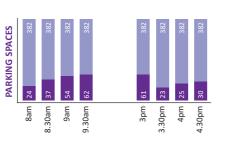


Fig 10. Parking survey results – Wed 14 September 2022 (SALT 3, 2022)

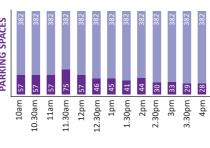


Fig 12. Parking survey results – Sat 10 September 2022 (SALT 3, 2022)

Supply Occupancy



Fig 11. Peak Hour Parking Occupancy - Wed 14 September 2022

Fig 13. Peak hour parking occupancy – Sat 10 September 2022 (SALT 3, 2022)

#### Intersections

SALT3 recommendations for intersections along Boronia street are as follows:

It is recommended to develop a footpath on the eastern side of Boronia Street and a raised intersection in the intersection of Boronia and Cedar Streets to reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety and connection.

The proposed raised intersection at Boronia and Cedar Streets will assist to slow vehicles and improve pedestrian crossing safety. This treatment results in the removal of one parallel parking space. However, this improves pedestrian sight lines to oncoming traffic when exiting the park, thus is a positive improvement.

It is also recommended to extend the footpath to allow pedestrians to cross Boronia Street from the southern side of Cedar Street.

emove parking space and extend kerb

Extend raised.

Garden to encourage

pedestrians toward

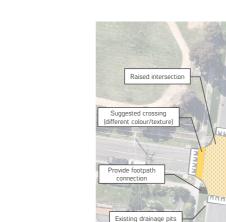
Reduce carriageway width to

6.0m. Ceate kerb outstand or

one or both sides (subject to functional design)

crossing points







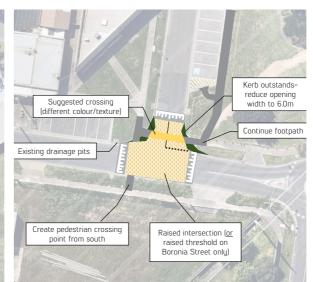


Figure 15. Alexander Avenue / Boronia Street proposed raised intersection (SALT 3, 2022)



Figure 16. Boronia Street / Waratah Street raised roundabout (SALT 3, 2022)

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The reserve is comprised of several facilities including playground, rock climbing wall, bocce rink, half basketball court, table tennis, playground, picnic facilities, public toilet, car parking, footy and soccer goals, community hall and scout hall. Some of these facilities are in a dilapidated situation and/or dysfunctional and require a master plan to assess their community need and upgrade.



This reserve is generally characterised by open grass area surrounded by garden beds and mature trees offset from the reserve boundaries. The study area is not in a floodplain zone but the lawn area is subject to water logging in winter.

The electricity transmission line with a 60m easement width runs along the middle of the reserve, dividing the site into two parts physically and visually and limits development around this corridor. Figures 18, 19 and 20, provides a summarised analysis of existing conditions.

The following pages provide images of a summarised analysis of existing conditions.



Figure 17. Electricity Transmission Corridor & Towers

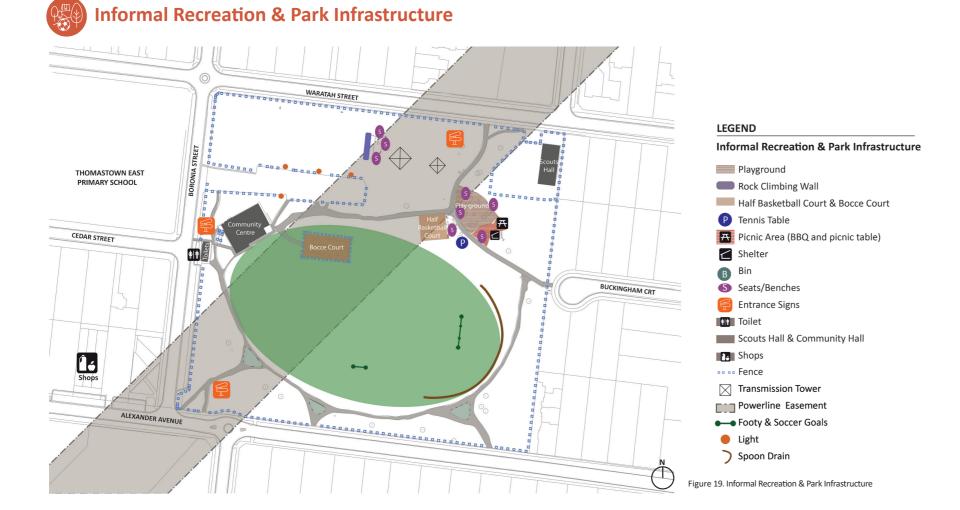




## Movement & Access



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## 3.2 Analysis

Site and desktop analysis, and internal and external consultation were undertaken to identify key issues and opportunities of the site.



### **3.2.1** Issues



## Movement and access

#### **Paths**

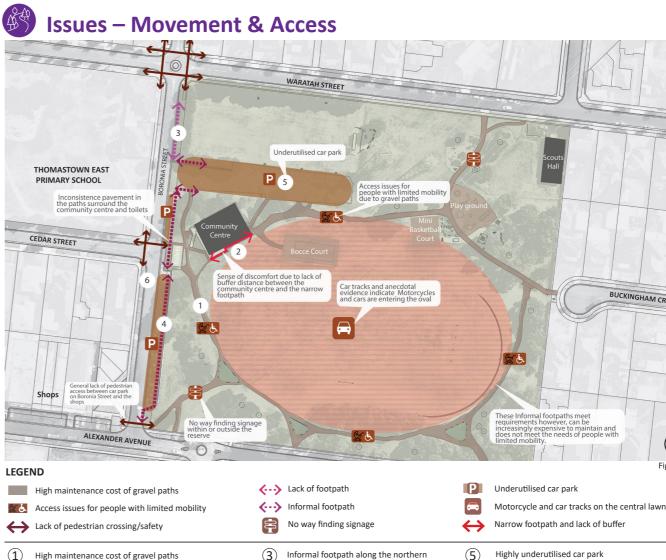
- The pathways within the reserve primarily consist of compacted gravel, particularly around the open grassed area, with varying widths. While these informal footpaths meet the minimum DDA requirements, they can become increasingly expensive to maintain and do not adequately cater to the needs of individuals with limited mobility
- The paths surrounding the community centre, scouts hall, and toilets are inconsistent in surface treatment and not DDA compliant
- There is an informal footpath along the northern side of Boronia Street, while the southern section lacks a formal footpath
- Walking next to the window of the Community Centre is not desirable, given the discomfort caused by the lack of buffer distance between the Community Centre and the footpath on the southeast side of it
- Lack of formal pathways throughout the reserve

#### Car parking

- No footpath access along Boronia Street to the car
- The car park has 54 spots, but only about 40% are used during busy times, indicating there is an excess of parking spaces
- · Car tracks and anecdotal evidence indicate motorcycles and cars are entering the oval

#### Entrance

- No way finding signage within the reserve
- · Lack of pedestrian safe crossing facilities, particularly from Thomastown East Primary School and Alexander Avenue Shops to the reserve



- Access issues for people with limited mobility
- High maintenance cost of gravel paths
- Sense of discomfort due to lack of buffer distance between community centre and footpath
- (4) Lack of footpath along the southern section of Boronia Street

side of Boronia Street

- Motorcycle and car tracks on the central lawn
- (5) Highly underutilised car park spaces with peak of 40% occupancy
- (6) Lack of crossing facilities along Boronia Street









footpath along the southern section









#### Informal recreation and park infrastructure

#### Play space

- Lack of suitable activities for older kids/youth e.g., skate parks, exercise equipment and community sports
- The rock climbing wall is underutilised due to it being dilapidated and unsafe. It is also isolated from other park features and does not have connecting paths

#### Informal recreation facilities

- The bocce court is in poor condition and currently fenced off. Its deteriorated state suggests that it hasn't been used much
- Lack of shade within the play space, limiting longer stays during sunny days
- The footy and soccer goals withing the central lawn are old and within proximity to powerlines
- The east orientation of the footy goals and proximity to the footpath is not ideal
- Lack of buffer between the pedestrian path and adjacent footy and soccer goals risk pedestrian safety

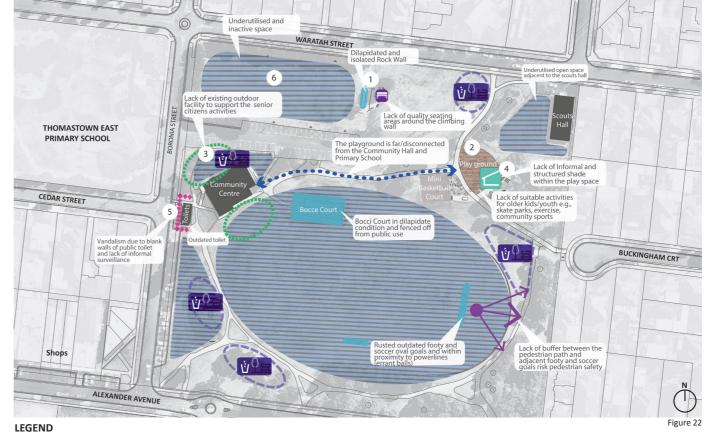
#### Park support facilities

- Lack of quality seating areas next to the climbing wall
- The increasing rubbish in the car park and reserve indicate shortage of adequate rubbish bins
- · Lack of drinking fountains and bottle refill stations
- Lack of existing outdoor facility to support users of the Community Centre who are mainly senior citizens
- The toilets, in high demand, are outdated and require upgrade or replacement to meet the growing needs of the community and bring them up to standards
- Vandalism is occurring due to bare walls of the public toilet and lack of surveillance

- Underutilised and inactive space on the north-west side of the park and south-west next to the shops
- Underutilised fenced-off open space next to the Scouts Hall
- Seats and benches are predominantly located on the north side of the reserve and not equally distributed
- The existing seats and benches are inconsistent in type and not DDA compliant



## **Issues – Informal Recreation & Park Infrastructure**



seating areas

- C Disconnected playgroud
- Dilapidated facilities Lack of quality seating areas
  - Dilapidated rock climbing wall/Lack of quality
  - Lack of suitable activities for older kids/youth eg., skate parks, exercise, community sports
- (3) Lack of outdoor facility to support the community centre

Lack of facilities such as bins,

Underutilised and inactive spaces

drink fountain, benches and bike rack

Vandalism due to bare walls of the public toilet

(4) Lack of shade within the play space

- Lack of shade
- Pedestrian safety risk due to lack of buffer
- Lack of outdoor supportive activities for the community centre
- (5) Outdated toilets
- (6) Underutilised and inactive space on the north-west side of the park and next to the scouts hall















## **Environment and landscape**

#### Landscape and vegetation

- The landscape is disjointed as a result of the car park which segregates the open space landscapes
- The lawn area is not well maintained and often overgrown
- Understory planting and thick bushes limiting visibility and passive surveillance into the park
- The lawn area is subject to water logging in winter

#### Look and feel

- Hidden areas and Visual barriers due to understory planting and thick bushes
- The north section of the reserve near the neighboring properties lacks any planting
- Poor perceptions of safety in the area due to lack of lighting at night-time, poor passive surveillance and open views, lack of activities/ things to do near the shops
- The visual impact of electricity transmission line is unappealing and can deter people from visiting the park
- The visual impact of the Scouts Hall car park and fence is unappealing, and the car park is not utilised

- No public area lighting exists within the reserve
- The existing (solar) lighting within the car park and external footpaths do not provide sufficient lighting resulting in the area being perceived as unsafe especially by the female members of the community
- Anti-social activity around the public toilet and the internal/off-street car park due to poor passive surveillance











LEGEND

Understory planting & Concealment area

Visual barrier Dead tree

> The visual impact of electricity transmission line The lawn area is subject to water logging in winter

(3) Lack of lighting and the presence of anti-social activity around the public toilet

(4) Dense understory planting

- - Lack of lighting

Insufficient lighting

Anti-social activities

(5) The north section of the reserve near the neighbouring property is bare

///// Bare area

Visual impact of powerlines

//// Potential waterlogging

6 Visual impact of the scouts hall car park











Figure 23

## 3.2.2 Opportunities



### Movement and access

#### Paths

- Investigate formalising the main existing paths within the reserve to concrete to create consistency within the reserve and minimise maintenance cost
- Consider footpath widening around the community centre, toilets, scout hall and external surrounding footpath
- Electricity transmission line provides a linear corridor which could be developed into a cycling/walking path throughout the reserve
- Improve pedestrian access into and through the reserve
- Investigate alternative paths around community centre and reinforce green buffer between the community centre and the path

#### Car parking and vehicle access

- Upgrade car park and return the excess space to open space
- Investigate relocation of the internal car park
- Investigate increasing bollards surrounding the reserve to avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- Extend the existing path along Boronia Street to car park

#### Entrances

 Improve the reserve entrances from surrounding streets to be more prominent, accessible and welcoming

 Consider traffic calming initiatives at intersections along Boronia Street





#### Play space

- Provide a new rock-climbing wall in close proximity of the play space
- Consider diversity in play comprising nature play elements and increase play space size in future playground upgrade
- Expand the play space comprising of more challenging features for older children and teenagers

#### Informal recreation facilities

- Investigate bocce court fence removal to allow the general public to access and use
- Increase informal and structured coverage for wet weather and hot summer days in all children's play areas
- Provide informal/passive recreation activities in the central lawn with the appropriate orientations and supporting infrastructure
- The south-east end of the central lawn could benefit from catch nets to prevent balls from the footy goals rolling onto the road

#### Park support facilities

- Provide more supportive facilities such as bins, seating areas, drinking fountains, bike racks and shade
- Investigate the opportunity to upgrade the central lawn for outdoor activities, informal recreation and school programs with supporting infrastructure
- Provide outdoor gathering opportunities for the community centre by activating underutilised spaces adjacent to it
- Investigate removal of the fence or taking some of the fenced-off area around Scout Hall, encouraging greater use of facility and supportive activities



#### **Landscape and vegetation**

- More shade trees around the play spaces
- Reinforce green and softscape buffers on north side of the reserve
- Additional tree planting

#### Look and feel

- Improve visibility to the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting or replacing with more suitable greenery
- Potential additional buffer planting in the north side of the reserve to soften the visual outlook
- Consider replacing fencing of Scout Hall car park by Scouts Victoria to improve look of the north entrance
- Reduce the visual impact of the electricity towers
- Consider time sensitive lighting within the reserve to increase use at night and increase passive surveillance
- Additional lighting to illuminate the internal/ off-street car park at night
- Enhance/activate the reserve frontages along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street
- Improve safety through activating underutilised spaces in the reserve and enhance passive surveillance opportunities
- Establish wayfinding signage to support pedestrian navigation across the reserve

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## 4.0 Consultation Summary

#### This section provides a summary of consultation activities.

The purpose of the community consultation was to gain an understanding of how the community use the reserve, how they would like to be using the reserve in the future, and their preferred priority upgrades. Two phases of consultation were undertaken with the results from both phases used to directly inform the key directions of the Master Plan. Refer to Appendix 2 for the full report.

Additionally, the 'Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2022' we have identified concerns relevant to Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

#### Methodology

The community were consulted on the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan in two phases:

- Phase 1 capturing challenges and opportunities of the site as part of the Revitalisation of Alexander Avenue shopping precinct, August 2022
- Phase 2 presentation of the draft master plan. May and June 2023

A range of methods and tools were used to engage with the community and key stakeholders over the two phases of consultation. These include the following:

- Meeting with key Council internal stakeholders
- Meeting with key external stakeholders
- Onsite interviews with the community

Direct mail outs

- Surveys
- Onsite pop-up sessions

#### **Key internal stakeholders**

Several key stakeholder meetings were held with Council staff from a range of departments including Urban Design & Transport, Capital Delivery, Strategic Projects, Active & Creative Communities and Communications & Engagement, and with various subject matter experts.

#### **Key external stakeholders**

Meetings were held with representatives from various key external stakeholders including the following:

- Traders on Alexander Avenue
- Thomastown East Primary School (staff and parents)
- Community Activity Centre users
- Scouts
- Visitors to the shops
- Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group
- Community

#### PHASE 1

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and discovering the key ideas for the park improvement.

#### **Outcome**

Overall, we heard that the area's infrastructure is

degrading and in need of repair, paths and car park areas do not meet current standards of compliance and existing land uses in the precinct can be better connected. Residents and visitors perceive the area as 'unsafe', 'uninviting' and 'dull'.

Feedback was received from 144 participants including traders in the activity centre, residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods, visitors to the shops and Nick Ascenzo Reserve as well as the students, their parents, and staff members of Thomastown East Primary School.

#### **Key Recommendations**

From the feedback received from the key stakeholders and the community, the following recommendations are made for inclusion in the Master Plan:

- Upgrade the playspace to include equipment for all
- · Provide activities for older kids
- Upgrade the path network, including realign and upgrade circuit path
- Ensure safety in the reserve by increase view lines and passive surveillance through the removal of understory vegetation
- Investigate expansion of the picnic area
- Provide outdoor supportive facilities for the community Centre's users
- Provide signage
- Improve lighting
- Upgrade the public toilet and investigate the relocation of the toilet block
- · Remove the existing dilapidated rock climbing wall

- Provide more seating
- Investigate providing community gardens in the
- Investigate the removal of the bocce court and better utilising of the space

The paths need to be paved, we walk our dog here and the paths are gross and muddy especially when it rains. It is very deserted and sad looking, could do with fencing and some landscaping for a good dog park."

- Community member

Always lots of rubbish, broken glass, the lawn is usually not well looked after."

- Community member

#### PHASE 2

The purpose of this engagement was to receive community feedback on the Draft Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan to ensure that the future of the site reflects our community's needs. Results from the first phase of consultation were used to create a design for the draft Master Plan. This plan was then exhibited to the community for feedback between 19 May and 25 June

Participants were asked the following questions:

- 1. How do you feel about the draft concept plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve?
- 2. Do you use the existing footy and soccer gaols and how often?
- 3. How do you feel about the draft master plan recommendations?
- 4. Is there anything that we have missed in the concept
- 5. Would you be in support of the dog off leash area in the reserve in future?

#### Outcome

The Nick Ascrenzo Reserve Master Plan page on Council's engage platform received 268 visitors with 33 community members completing the online or sharing their thoughts through pop up sessions.

supports the Master Plan with inclusion of the below new or amended recommendations.

The consultation responses demonstrate the community

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#### **Key Recommendations**

The consultation demonstrated that the community supports the recommendations of the Master Plan. The following recommendations were developed from the detailed community feedback:

- Create a new path from the car park to the Community Centre
- Line mark the proposed circuit path with distance markers to allow for formal running
- Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins and seating, and review waste bins locations around the park
- Incorporate similar rock climbing elements in the proposed playspace
- Investigate the development of a new path next to the playground which allows skating, skateboarding, scooter and BMX
- Investigate the development of a water play area in other larger parks in Thomastown or neighbouring suburbs
- Note: Nick Ascenzo Reserve is limited due to the high voltage powerlines and does not allow for water play and associated infrastructure.
- Investigate increasing the playground surface material from organic mulch to rubber
- Expand the proposed fitness and exercise equipment to allow for different user groups
- Investigate potential for upgrades to the existing toilet block including relocation as part of the Community Centre's future upgrade
- Investigate the potential for providing an open unstructured dog off-leash area with the review of 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan' and 'Open Space Plan'
- Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the multi-purpose court due to nearby streets

- Incorporate park lighting in warm colours at the park entrances, and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways
- Investigate the traffic calming initiatives at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection near the north east park entry.
- Note: Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection is out of the scope of the project and needs further investigation by the Traffic Team.

#### **Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework Engagement** Summary 2022

The Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework identified the following five concerns relevant to Nick Ascenzo Reserve:

- Shade, and coverage in children play areas
- Anti-social behaviour and concealment areas
- Car and motorcycle tracks on the s ports oval
- Lack of maintenance
- Potential for recreational activities

## **Consultation and Engagement Main Themes** August 2022, May & June 2023 **General safety Pedestrian access** and safety

Parking and traffic movements





**Public art** 

Greenery



High quality design



More things to do



Signage





**Cars and motorcycles** 

are entering the

sports oval



Figure 24. Community Feedback Summary

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## **5.0** Master Plan

### **5.1** Vision and key objectives

The site analysis and consultation work undertaken has resulted in a vision to improve the functional layout of Nick Asceznzo Reserve as a Municipal Park upon the delivery of seven key objectives:

#### Vision

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is an inclusive and distinctive park that provides a range of active recreation, informal sport and social opportunities for all people to enjoy whilst enhancing the natural values of the park. It provides an environment that is accessible, well-connected, attractive and sustainably managed.

#### Objectives



Establish a well-maintained reserve



Promote environmental sustainability and landscape character



nvite and inspire people of all ages and abilities

and events



Provide well-defined, safe and accessible connections within the reserve and the Alexander Avenue shops and Thomastown East Primary School



pgrade informal sporting frastructure and ommunity facilities



Provide clear sight lines across the reserve and activate during night and day to improve perceptions of safety in the area

#### 5.2 Recommendations

The Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan sets out recommendations which are articulated through the key themes of Movement & Access, Informal Recreation & Park Infrastructure, and Environment & Landscape.

#### **Movement and Access**

- » Path
- Realign and upgrade circuit path, comprised of a 3m wide path including a coloured and marked 400m running loop
- Proposed concrete footpath along Boronia Street with minimum 1.5m width
- » Entrance
- Upgrade the north-east, west and two south entrances as more significant and welcoming entrances by providing wayfinding signage, feature paving, lighting, and landscaping
- » Car parking
- Proposed footpath from Boronia Street to the carpark accessing the Community Centre and proposed exercise area
- Proposed upgraded car park with a water-sensitive approach

#### **Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure**

- » Playspace
- Proposed playground including range of play experiences (nature-based play)
- Proposed scooter, skate and BMX loop with mounds
- Remove the existing dilapidated rock climbing/ bouldering wall and install similar climbing elements in the proposed play space

- Change the playground surface material as part of the playground renewal program
- Proposed fence on the north side of the multipurpose court due to catch balls
- » Informal Recreation facilities
- Proposed multi-purpose court
- Proposed fitness and exercise station
- Remove the existing fenced bocce court
- Remove the existing old goals in grassed area
- Flexible central lawn for games, events and picnics
- » Park Support facilities
- Expand the picnic area to the south-west with a new shelter, seating, drinking fountain and bins
- Install diverse DDA compliant seating at high use areas such as the playground and forecourt of the Community Centre and entrance from Alexander Avenue Shops
- Allow for Community Centre future upgrade and/or extension as per the Council Community Infrastructure Plan
- Improve the forecourt of the Community Centre, including a bus drop-off area
- Upgrade the toilet block (location will be further investigated in future as part of the community centre upgrade), with shorter term improvement of the safety and amenity
- Proposed outdoor gathering space in proximity to the community centre
- Proposed plaza space near Alexander Avenue Shops with seating, drinking fountain and small shade trees
- Proposed additional park furniture including drinking fountains, bins and seating

#### **Environment & Landscape**

- » Landscape & Vegetation
- Plant additional trees throughout the reserve to strengthen ecological biodiversity with AusNet approval
- Investigate the species type for the proposed planting to ensure it doesn't obstruct pedestrian sightlines
- Investigate captured rainwater irrigation system to maintain grass coverage of the central lawn
- Low maintenance garden beds next to the proposed skate/scooter loop and proposed picnic area
- Increase shade through more canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- » Look & feel
- Improve visibility into the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting and replace with low maintenance plants to eliminate visual barriers
- Proposed lighting along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street from the bus stop to the Community Centre, and the internal/off-street car park
- Investigate lighting the reserve's internal paths and elements with the holistic Public Realm Lighting Plan
- Remove the existing tree in the south-east corner of the reserve to open the pedestrian sight line and have a more welcoming entrance
- Reduce the fenced area around Scouts Hall and reinstate it to open space
- Upgrade the reserve timber and post barriers to standard vehicle exclusion fencing (bollard and cable)

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#### **Master Plan**



The location of the multi-purpos

- Realign and upgrade circuit path, comprised of a 3m wide path including a coloured and marked 400m running loop
- 2 Proposed outdoor gathering space
- 3) Remove understory planting and open sightlines
- 4 Proposed plaza space with seating area, drinking fountain and small shade trees
- 5) Proposed upgraded car park (26 car park bays)
- (6) Improve the forecourt of the Community Centre, including a bus drop-off area
- 7) Upgrade the toilet block
- (8) Proposed fitness and exercise station
- (9) Proposed multi-purpose court
- (10) Proposed mounds
- Proposed playground including range of play experiences (nature-based play)
- (12) Increase shade through more canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- Expand the picnic area to the south-west with a new shelter, picnic settings, drinking fountain and hins
- 14) Entry node with way finding signage
- 15 Proposed lighting along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street from the bus stop to the Community Centre, main entrance and the internal/off-street car park
- (16) Proposed footpath from Boronia Street to the car park accessing the Community Hall and the proposed Senior Exercise Park
- (17) Proposed concrete footpath along Boronia Street
- (18) Flexible central lawn for games, events and
- (19) Mulch the garden bed and plant small trees
- (20) Proposed scooter, skate and BMX loop
- (21) Remove the existing old goals
- (22) Remove the existing fenced bocce court
- 23) Remove the existing dilapidated rock climbing wall and install similar climbing elements in the proposed play space
- (24) Upgrade the reserve vehicle exclusion fencing

#### **Precedent Imagery**

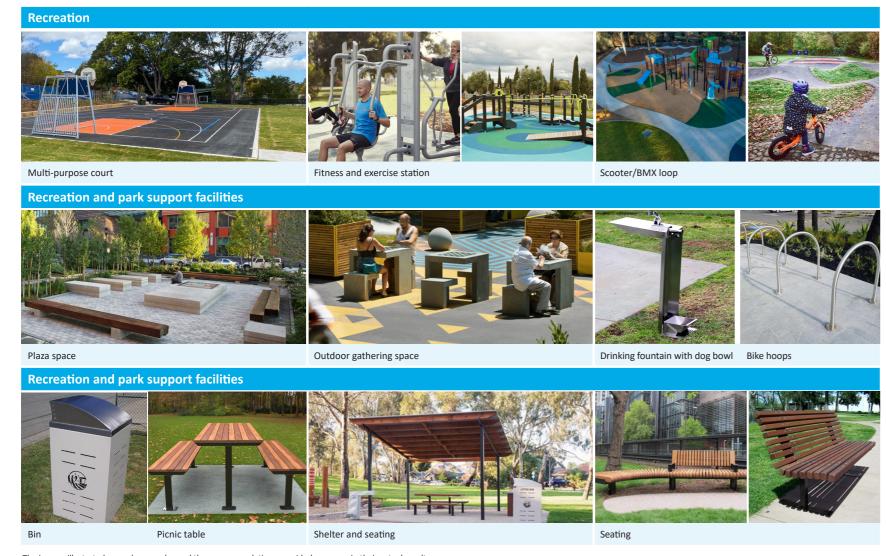






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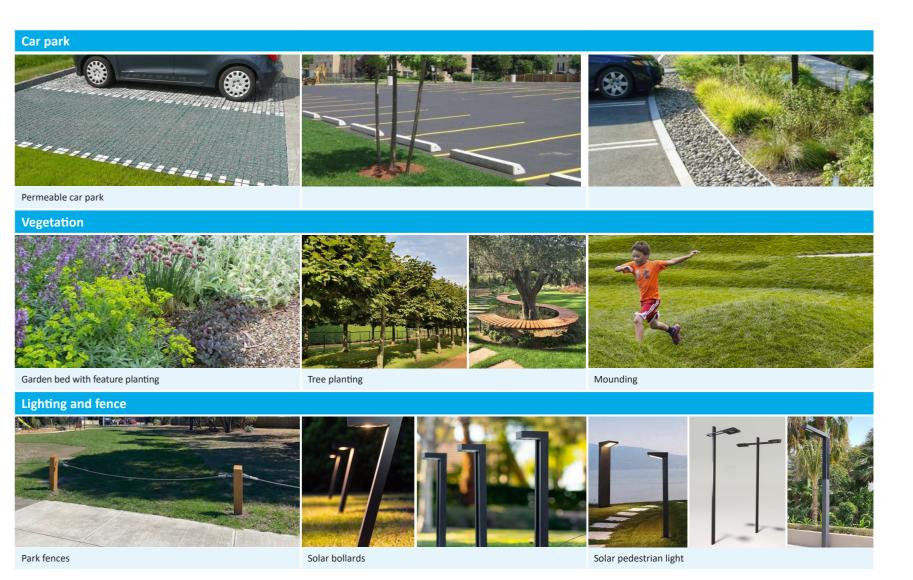
#### **Precedent Imagery**



The images illustrated are only examples and the recommendations provided may vary in their actual result.

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#### **Precedent Imagery**



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## 6.0 Master Plan Implementation

The implementation of the Master Plan will be mostly procured through Council funding, however, some additional funding through **State Government Grants s will** contribute to certain prosed initiatives within the overall Master Plan.

A summary of the project packages, actions and time frames for each precinct are outlined below.

Priorities of projects and actions from this master plan are a guide and are subject to holistic Council Capital Works project prioritisation.

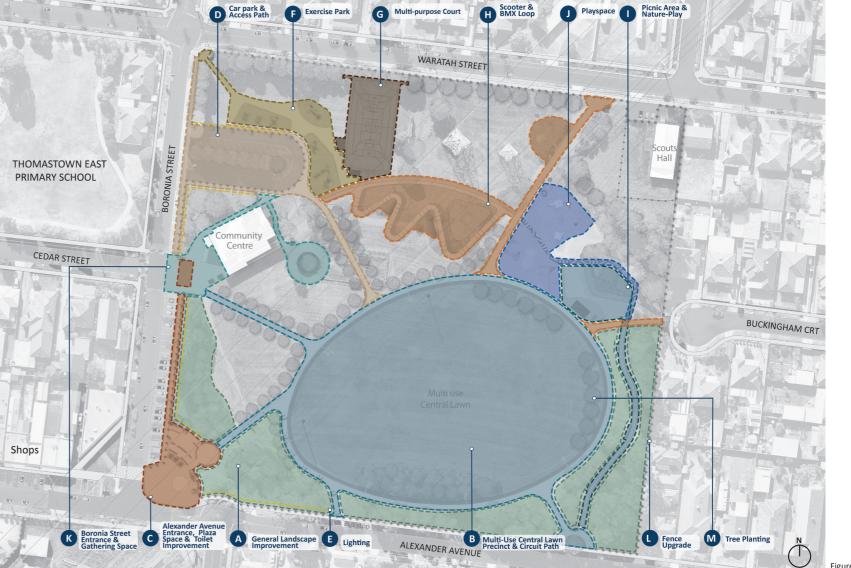
Reference/ Area	Project Package	Priority
Α	General Landscape Improvement	Short term
В	Multi-Use Central Lawn Precinct & Circuit Path	Short term
С	Alexander Avenue Entrance, Plaza Space & Toilet Improvement	Short term
D	Car Park & Access Path	Short term
E	Lighting	Short term
F	Fitness & Exercise Station	Medium term
G	Multi-Purpose Court	Medium term
Н	Scooter, skate & BMX Loop	Medium term
I	Picnic Area & Nature-Play	Medium term
J	Playspace	Medium term
K	Boronia Street Entrance & Gathering Space	Long term
L	Fence Upgrade	Short to Long term
M	Tree Planting	Short to Long term

SHORT TERM (1-3 years)

MEDIUM TERM (4-7 years)

LONG TERM (8-10 years)

### **Project Packages Master Plan**





**Area A:** General Landscape Improvement



Key Plan



Area B: Multi-Use Central Lawn
Precinct & Circuit Path



Key Pl

	_			
Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal	Potential Grant
			Programs	opportunity
A	Remove understory planting and open sightlines (General plant reduction by one third in garden beds)	Short term		n/a

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
<b>B1</b>	Remove the existing circuit path and any paths branching from it to allow for new works	Short term		
<b>B2</b>	Realign and upgrade circuit path, comprised of a 3m wide path including a coloured and marked 400m running loop	Short term		State Government
<b>B3</b>	Investigate captured rainwater irrigation system to maintain grass coverage of the central lawn	Medium term		Water authority
B4	Remove the existing old footy and soccer goals in grassed area	Medium term		
<b>B5</b>	Additional tree planting within the central lawn (east side)	Medium term	Greening Whittlesea Park Planting	

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Area C: Alexander Avenue Entrance,
Plaza Space and Toilet Improvement

Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
<b>(1)</b>	Remove the current tree to improve the view into the reserve and enhance the pedestrian sightline	Short term		
<b>©</b> 2	Upgrade the entrance from Alexander Avenue next to the shops by providing entry and wayfinding signage, feature paving, lighting, bike rack, and landscaping	Short term		State Government
<b>3</b>	New open plaza space with feature paving, drinking fountain, seating and small shade trees	Short term		State Government
<b>C4</b>	New 1.5m concrete footpath along Boronia Street up to the toilet block	Short term		
<b>C</b> 5	Improve safety and amenity of the existing toilet block	Short term	Asset Renewal Program	



Area D: Car park & Access path



Key Pl

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
01	Remove the half of the existing internal carpark to allow for new works and retain the second half for temporary activities such as learn to ride	Medium term		State Government
02	Upgrade the car park including 26 car park spaces with permeable pavement facing inwards to passively irrigate the existing trees (WSUD approach), fences and gate	Medium term	Car park Renewal Program	Water authority
<b>D3</b>	Remove/relocate existing trees from the entrance of the upgraded car park	Medium term		
D4	Remove the existing fenced bocce court and its shelters to allow for new works	Medium term		
<b>D</b> 5	New 1.5m concrete footpath along Boronia Street from the toilet block up to Waratah Street	Medium term		
<b>D6</b>	Upgrade and additional solar lighting to car parking & relocate the existing solar light	Medium term		State Government

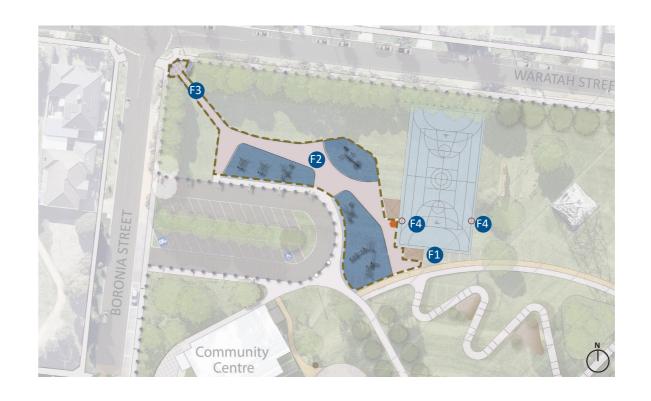
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Area E: Lighting



Key Plan



**Area F:** Fitness & Exercise Station



Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
<b>(3</b> )	Lighting along Alexander Avenue and Boronia Street from the bus stop to the Community Centre, main entrance and the internal/off-street car park	Short term		

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
<b>[1</b> ]	Remove the second half of the internal car park to allow for new works	Medium term		
<b>(2)</b>	Creation of an outdoor exercise/fitness area with exercise equipment for different age groups including clear instructional signage and QR codes to show people how to use the equipment	Medium term		State Government
<b>3</b>	New entrance and access path from Boronia street to the proposed exercise area	Medium term		
<b>F4</b>	Relocation of two solar lights to allow for new work	Medium term		



Area G: Multi-purpose Court



Key Plan



Area H: Scooter, Skate & BMX Loop



Key Pl

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
OT.	New multi-purpose sports court which allows soccer too with colourful and creative line- marking with a drinking fountain, two shade shelters and seating	Medium term		State Government
<b>@</b>	Fence off the north side of the proposed court to catch balls	Medium term		

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
H1	Remove the existing gravel and concrete paths, half basketball court, climbing wall and benches to allow for new works	Medium term		
<b>H</b> 2	New scooter & BMX loop with seating area and additional landscaping including tree planting, a garden bed, turf and mounding	Medium term		State Government
HB	Realign and upgrade paths from Waratah Street and Buckingham CRT to the circuit path	Medium term		
<b>H4</b>	Mulch the existing garden bed next to the path and plant small trees	Long term		
H5	Additional tree planting and turf	Long term	Greening Whittlesea Park Planting	

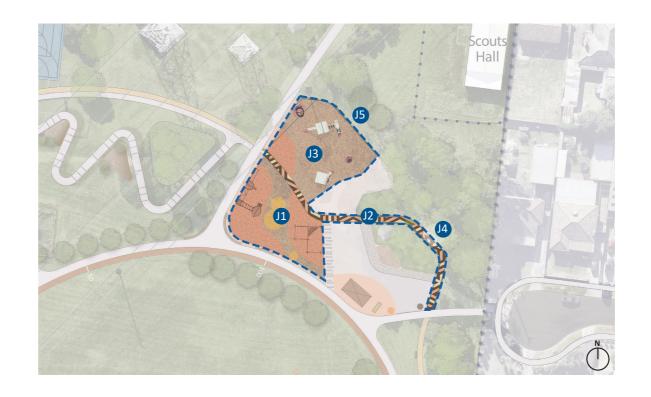
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Area I: Picnic Area & Nature-Play



Key Plan



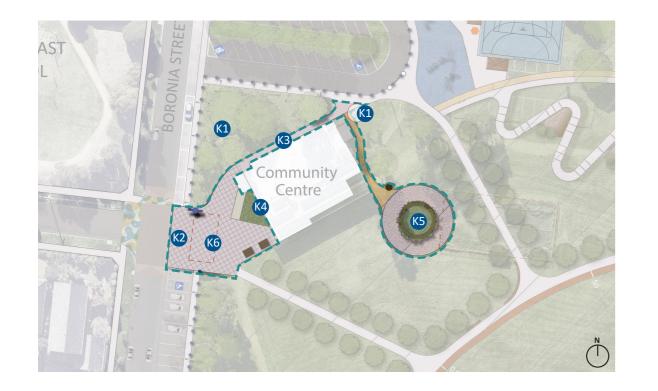
Area J: Playspace



Key Plan

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
<b>(1)</b>	Expand the picnic area to the south-west with a new shelter, picnic setting, drinking fountain and bin	Medium term		
(2)	Retain the existing shelter structures, undertaking repairs as required	Medium term		
<b>B</b>	New path along the residential side with benches connecting the south-east entrance to the picnic area providing passive surveillance opportunities	Medium term		
14	Creation of a nature play area utilising the existing trees and proposed plants to learn, explore and play. Inclusion of small details that creates an element of surprise and curiosity such as timber logs and mudrock	Long term		State Government

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
1	Creation of playground extension with seating and play equipment including range of play experience	Medium term	Playground Renewal Program	State Government
<b>J2</b>	Creation of colour concrete path linking the nature play area to the scooter/BMX loop	Medium term		
<sub>[3</sub>	Upgrade the existing play equipment and investigate increasing the playground surface material from organic mulch to rubber as part of the playground renewal program	Long term	Playground Renewal Program	State Government
J4	Remove/relocate the tree to allow for new works	Medium term		
<b>J</b> 5	Additional tree planting around the playspace to provide shade	Long term		



Area K: Boronia Street Entrance & Gathering Space



Key Plan



Area L: Fence Upgrade



кеу

Reference/ Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
K1	Remove the existing concrete and gravel paving and the tree on the north side of the community centre and public toilet to allow for new work	Long term		
<b>(2</b> )	Improve entrance area as an integrated and visible main entrance with feature paving and entry signage including a bus drop-off area	Long term		
<b>K3</b>	Creation of a new path from the upgraded car park to the Community Centre	Long term		
K4	Improve garden beds surrounding the entrance ramp of the community centre through feature landscaping	Long term		
K5	Creation of an outdoor gathering space with a shade tree, seating and bin	Long term		
<b>K6</b>	Public toilet location to be further investigated in future as part of the community centre upgrade	Long term	Asset Renewal program	

Reference/Area	Project Package	Timeframe	Council Renewal Programs	Potential Grant opportunity
<b>(1)</b>	Upgrade the reserve timber and post barriers to standard vehicle exclusion fencing (bollard and cable)	Short to Long term	Vehicle Exclusion Fencing Program	
(2)	Reduce the fenced area allocated to the Scouts Hall	Medium term		



**Area M:** Tree Planting



Key Plan

# Reference/Area Project Package Timeframe Council Renewal Programs opportunity Additional tree planting within the multi use central lawn and along the proposed paths Short to long term Greening Whittlesea Park Planting

## Appendix 1

Review of Plans, Policies and Strategies





Appendix 2

**Community Engagement** 

### **Council Offices**

25 Ferres Boulevard South Morang VIC 3752

Email: info@whittlesea.vic.gov.au Website whittlesea.vic.gov.au

**Postal address** 

City of Whittlesea Locked Bag Bundoora MDC VIC 3083

**Phone:** 9217 2170

National Relay Service: 133 677 (ask for 9217 2170)

Connect with us in your preferred language:

Free telephone interpreter service



**131** 450



## **Appendix 1**

# Review of Relevant Plans, Policies and Strategies

A number of the City of Whittlesea's existing strategic planning documents, policies and strategies have influenced the Nick Asceznzo Reserve Master Plan. The following section contains summaries of the main background documents reviewed including any key directions relevant to the reserve.

### Whittlesea 2040 - A place for all

The City of Whittlesea's 2040 – A place for all is a long-term vision supporting the municipality to be ready for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring, and ensures that the City of Whittlesea is a great place to live now and in the future.

Whittlesea 2040 outlines four interconnected goals which have been identified as essential elements to realising the core vision.

The community consultation undertaken for Whittlesea 2040 included over 4,000 people participating through submissions, workshops and forums. Feedback was received from all ages ranging from 3 years to 85+. Listed below are the key goals related to the actions and objectives in the master plan:

### Goal 1 - Connected Community

- A socially cohesive community
- A healthy and safe community
- A participating community

### Goal 2 - Liveable Neighbourhoods

Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

### Goal 4 - Sustainable Environment

- Valued natural landscape and biodiversity
- Climate ready
- Leaders in clean, sustainable living

### **Open Space Strategy 2016**

The Open Space Strategy guides the future design and management of public open space in the City of Whittlesea, and provides a framework for the planning and provision of open space across the older established urban and rural areas of the municipality. The Strategy includes specific actions for all the existing and proposed open space in the established areas.

The Open Space Strategy identified a general gap in open space provision on the Eastern side of the railway. Nick Ascenzo Park is considered the only significant area of open space north of the Metropolitan

NICK ASCENZO RESERVE MASTER PLAN | OPEN SPACE PLANNING CITY OF WHITTLESEA | APPENDIX 1  $\,$ 

Ring Road between High Street and Dalton Road. It is a municipal scale open space with a 500m walkable catchment.

Through the consultation for the OSS, Nick Ascenzo Reserve was identified as one of the more frequently visited spaces mainly for walking and enjoying the peaceful/quiet atmosphere. The community suggested the provision of more flowers and colourful vegetation. Other general comments are to provide additional multiuse spaces, improve ambiance and provide diverse and more challenging playground equipment.

The Open Space Strategy includes recommendations for existing individual open spaces in Thomastown. Action 5.9E-5 which has not been initiated yet pertains to the Nick Ascenzo Reserve specifically as a medium priority action.

'Prepare a Landscape Masterplan to guide future upgrades and use of this park for both structured and unstructured sport and recreation use. This review is to consider the car parking facility location (including the play area); improving the connection between the adjoining shopping precinct and the park; and improving visual access into the park through trimming selected vegetation.'

### **Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2023**

Thomastown Lalor Urban Design Framework guides and prioritises Council's future initiatives for Thomastown and Lalor utilising an integrated place-based approach.

The framework builds upon the extensive work and community consultation previously undertaken and identifies projects based on this research. It plans for now and the future, whilst providing a framework for continued improvements that will build upon what makes Thomastown and Lalor a special place.

During the community consultation for Thomastown Lalor Urban Design Framework challenges and opportunities in July 2021, the community posted the comments on the 'social map' tool. The comment is generally positive and highlights the park's role in leisure and recreation for the residents of Thomastown despite the concerns about the antisocial behaviour around the public toilets.

Additionally, During the community consultation for Thomastown and Lalor Draft Place Framework in November-December 2022, the community posted the below comments about the Nick Ascenzo park on the 'social map' tool.

- Create more coverage for wet weather and hot summer days. Add in public toilets and ensure the surrounding grass in kept maintained.
- Shade and covers for sun protection and wet weather in all children's play areas would be great. Removal of tan bark and replacement with pour rubber surfacing.
- Could be really lovely space to use. At the moment motorcycles and cars can get on the oval and drive recklessly. One happened just this afternoon. There was a homeless person sleeping under the childrens playground for over a month with all there personal items left there during the day. No lights or safety outside of the main daylight hours. People regularly leave used needles lying around and broken glass everywhere. There are not enough bins.
- Make this an area enticing to families. Lots of undesirables leave rubbish in the car park and aren't there for positive reasons. Possibly include a dog park and try to make the oval one that can be used

for community sport. Make the nearby shops enticing for restaurants and cafes for young people with outdoor seating.

- It'd be great to make use of this open space. Currently very run-down but full of potential to be a place to recreation and community.
- Please fix the park. The garden is ugly.

### Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Management Plan 2016–2026

The City of Whittlesea's Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Management Plan 2016-2026 provides Council with clear direction for the provision, management and operation of Off-Leash Areas within the Municipality. The Plan's mission is to provide residents and their dogs with safe and sustainable off-leash opportunities that can be accessed equitably, while considering the needs of all open space users.

There are three types of Off-Leash Areas considered under the Management Plan: Open Unstructured; Confined Unstructured and Confined Structured. Nick Ascezno Reserve isn't identified under the plan as a future Off-Leash Area. The plan didn't Identify any existing or future dog ff-leash area in the Thomastown.

There are three categories of Off-Leash Areas outlined in the Management Plan: Open Unstructured, Confined Unstructured, and Confined Structured. However, Nick Ascenzo Reserve isn't designated as a forthcoming Off-Leash Area in the plan.

### Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027

The purpose of the Walking and Cycling Plan (2022-2027) is to improve walking and cycling conditions in the municipality, raise awareness about the opportunities for walking and cycling and increase the level of walking and cycling participation.

The plan outlines that City of Whittlesea residents experience a number of barriers to uptake of Active Travel, unique to its size (covering an area of approximately 489 square kilometres) and growth that differentiates it from the inner city Local Government Areas. In particular:

- Long distances to key destinations
- Time spent travelling to work each day limiting access to personal time for recreation
- Lack of infrastructure
- Wait time to cross busy roads
- Missing links in the footpath network
- Access to open space
- Lack of tree canopy cover

The Plan outlines that current levels of active travel participation are low in the City of Whittlesea. Walking and cycling is mostly undertaken for recreational purposes – 8.9 per cent of all trips are by

Walking in the City of Whittlesea, in comparison to 16.4 per cent across Greater Melbourne, and 0.6 per cent are by bicycle (1.7 per cent across Greater Melbourne).

The Plan also outlines four key directions and a suite of actions aimed at improving conditions to enable more walking and cycling across the municipality. The key directions are as follows:

- (a) Make active travel safer
- (b) Encourage and promote active travel
- (c) Build and maintain a high-quality network
- (d) Monitor active travel in the future

Alexander Avenue is identified within the City of Whittlesea draft Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027 as a priority project. It is in the feasibility stage to provide improved walking and cycling facilities between Thomastown Station and Dalton Road.

### Community Plan 2021-2025

The City of Whittlesea's Community Plan 2021-2025 shapes the future for the City of Whittlesea and has been

informed by extensive community engagement. It clearly articulates what Council plans to achieve between 2021 and 2025, how it will prioritise its resources and effort, and how it will measure success by meeting the needs of its community.

The Community Plan 2021-2025 has developed 60 initiatives under Whittlesea 2040 goals, which will be delivered between 2021 and 2025, and which respond to community priorities. This includes Council's planning to achieve key health and inclusion outcomes such as family violence prevention, climate change, gender equality, reducing barriers to goods, services and facilities access, participation in employment, inclusive communications and preventing discrimination against persons with a disability. In developing the Community Plan, Council considered the community's goals and aspirations set out in Whittlesea 2040.

As part of the development of the Community Plan, The City of Whittlesea invited the community to share its ideas and priorities for Council to focus on delivering over the next four years. Council asked the community two key questions to consider when forming their views and ideas:

- What should Council focus on over the next 4-10 years to make sure the City of Whittlesea is a connected community, with liveable neighbourhoods, a vibrant local economy and a sustainable environment?
- How should Council's \$2m Community Recovery Fund be spent to help our community recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Across all of the engagement activities, The Plan listed 6 priorities that people were strongly in favour of. The first & fourth priorities which are relevant to open spaces are listed below:

- More parks and playgrounds and improving the maintenance of those we already have.
- Biodiversity, including planting more trees, conserving habitats and looking after wildlife

Other priorities are Public safety, festivals, events, arts, culture, heritage and markets, social connection: access and inclusion, sports facilities and infrastructure and community groups and community infrastructure.

To help recovery from COVID-19, the community asked Council to focus on three themes. Two of them which are relevant to open spaces are:

- <u>Community connections</u>, including supporting vulnerable people and providing facilities and spaces for groups of people to meet
- Health promotion, emphasising mental health and wellbeing; natural environments and green open space; connected walking and cycling paths and trails, safety in public places and opportunities for social connection and exercise.

Additionally, The Plan listed recommendations for the \$2 million Pandemic Community Recovery Fund related to 2040 goals. Recommendations applicable to open spaces include:

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

Recommended action

- Create more community gardens and support local events
- Advocate for better public transport
- Build health and recreational facilities
- Provide more public amenities

The Plan also proposes key initiatives related to CoW 2040 goals. The applicable initiatives to open spaces which Council will deliver in 2021-2025 include:

Goal 1 - Connected Community Goal

Key Initiatives:

- Improve safety and perceptions of community safety in public spaces including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender-diverse people
- Improve safety and perceptions of community safety in public spaces including for people with disabilities and their carers, women, girls and gender-diverse people
- Strengthen community connections through a vibrant arts and events scene celebrating our diverse culture and heritage, activated open spaces and facilities and local markets
- Commence construction of a leisure and wellbeing facility in Mernda
- Improve access to physical activity and social connection by providing accessible, multiuse sports infrastructure which meets the diverse needs of our community

Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

Key Initiatives:

- Increase the quality, access, safety and amount of public open space in the municipality, including additional dog parks and a local park improvement program
- Develop and implement a plan to improve public toilets making them accessible, useable and safe

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5

Design and upgrade local streetscapes and shopping precincts to make it easier to move about,
 celebrate local culture, heritage and character, and connect people to the natural environment

Goal 4 - Sustainable Environment

**Key Initiatives:** 

- Deliver on our Greening Whittlesea Strategy including increasing tree canopy along main road residential streets and in conservation reserves, park and major facilities
- Goal 5 High-performing Organisation

Key Initiatives:

 Continue to strengthen local community engagement in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy to inform Council programs and decision-making

### Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041 (Draft)

The City of Whittlesea's Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021 – 2041 (the Plan) provides a framework to guide the provision of sport and leisure infrastructure within the City of Whittlesea. the Plan:

- Identifies what sport and leisure infrastructure is needed to build healthy and active communities across the City of Whittlesea
- Provides an overview of existing infrastructure currently available to the community
- Defines Council's role and level of service in infrastructure delivery to meet ongoing community needs
- Makes informed and evidence-based recommendations on the distribution of possible locations for future facility provision.

The Plan adopts a four-stage methodology and a place-based approach to maximise consideration of local factors that may influence participation in the sport and leisure activities assessed; including but not limited to demographics, natural or built barriers and participation trends.

The plan identifies the south west region (Epping, Thomastown and Lalor) with the highest level of Socio-economic Disadvantage across the City of Whittlesea according to the region profile.

The Plan also provides the provision assessment which presents an overview of the theoretical number of facilities needed to meet total demand within the nominated regions and a rating reflective of how the demand will be met by the proposed asset responses within the Plan.

Based on the provision assessment for this region, the plan proposes that limited changes are required in this region as provision is servicing established sporting clubs and community groups. Existing facilities play an important role in supporting neighbouring regions that have facility shortages and there are three vacant sites. There is little demand for new facilities and the priority for this region is renewal of ageing infrastructure to ensure it remains fit for purpose. It also identifies Nick Ascenzo Reserve with an existing Community Centre as a multi-purpose space(hall).

Also, the provision assessment table for this region rates the following facilities as the facilities that are met within the municipality and not the region.

- Outdoor playing field (Athletics)
- Outdoor playing field (Diamond)
- Outdoor playing field (Diamond)
- Golf course
- Outdoor skate sport facility
- Bowls green
- Gymnastics Centre

### **Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028**

The City of Whittlesea's *Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028* is an evidence-based strategy and action plan to guide the planning, provision and promotion of sport, leisure and recreation programs, services and facilities within the City of Whittlesea over the next ten years. Active Whittlesea aims to increase the number of residents who are physically active by 10 per cent and includes actions to achieve the overall goal of: *75 per cent of residents participating in one or more hours of physical activity per week by September 2028.* To achieve this goal Council will implement three key directions, consistent with community feedback and grounded in evidence-based practice.

Key Direction 1	Communications and Promotion — increasing the physical literacy and community awareness of inclusive participation opportunities
Key Direction 2	Responsive Programs and Partnerships — programs that respond to local needs and partnerships that share skills, knowledge and resources to generate positive community outcomes
Key Direction 3	Open Space / Infrastructure — ensuring local communities have access to places and spaces that are safe, inclusive, accessible and meet their needs

Priority Actions applicable to Nick Ascenzo Reserve include:

- 3.1 Improve equity, accessibility and safety of community spaces through the development of infrastructure plans and the delivery of inclusively designed new works projects
- 3.4 Connect, improve and expand existing travel networks to create built environments that support active travel, incidental exercise and physical activity

### **Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026**

The Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026: Broadening opportunities for participation in sport provides information and direction on how Council can support less traditional or emerging sports to ensure residents have access to a range of sport and recreation opportunities. The Strategy investigates the needs and demands of 34 different sports and makes recommendations on future facility requirements and development opportunities to support the growth of these sports.

Each sport covered in this Strategy has been given a level of priority to help guide Council resources and investment into their future planning and development. Ten sports were given a high priority as these are seen to have the greatest demand at the local level.

The high priority sports have been identified	Seven sports have been identified as second tier
as:	priority:
Athletics	Hockey
Baseball	Badminton
Calisthenics	Bocce
Dance	Croquet
Softball	Kabaddi
Gymnastics	Volleyball
Martial Art	Table Tennis
Touch Football	
Rugby League	
Rugby Union	

In addition to the sports above, 17 sports were identified as requiring no action in the short term.

Nick Asceznzo Reserve currently has bocce court and table tennis from the sports listed in the report.

### Playspace Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16

The City of Whittlesea's Playspace Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16 is a comprehensive document aimed at informing Council officers and developers responsible for providing or maintaining playspaces within the Municipality with an understanding of the value and principles of play. The Policy reflects current research into the importance of play and nature play for children as well as adults and acknowledges that play happens everywhere while providing direction on how to design and provide best practice play environments in delineated municipal playspaces and playgrounds.

As Nick Asceznzo Reserve is identified as a Municipal level open space as part of the Open Space Strategy, the Playspace Planning Framework and Policy defines a Municipal Reserve as a district playspace. A district playspace is a space that provides a broad range of play opportunities and amenities, which allows for a longer stay, and is often co-located with a sports reserve or a passive recreation reserve with a range of parkland features. A district reserve is likely to have more amenities than smaller parks and provide for a range of play and social opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Other characteristics of a district playspace, as described in the Policy, are listed below:

- District playspaces should be located within a 15-minute cycle trip around two kilometres from residents' homes.
- Catchment populations are estimated to be around 8000 persons.
- Embellishment costs for the playspace (not including amenities that may be provided for if it was
- located within a reserve with existing amenities) could range from \$300,000 to \$500,000
- District playspaces provide a range of play and social opportunities for all ages and abilities. Taking
  into account the disability design features of local and neighbourhood playspaces, district
  playspaces could provide specialised facilities, for example, a playspace designed to cater for
  children with specific disability such as hearing impairments. It is known that play opportunities

and equipment designed for children and young people with a disability provide greater variety, stimulation and play value for all children and young people.

### **Thriving Children, Young People and Families Strategy**

Thriving Children, Young People and Families outlines the City of Whittlesea's evidence-based approach to supporting the health, wellbeing and positive development of children, young people and their families in the municipality. It responds to the needs of people from before birth to 25 years. It aims to start a conversation, to inspire innovation and to provide a flexible and adaptive framework to work from. It provides the strategic direction for Council to meet its requirement under the Local Government Act (1989) to build safe, healthy communities and to provide equal access to services and facilities.

The plan refers to all aspects of the public realm including the built environment, the natural environment, facilities, town centres, streetscapes and open space as Physical Infrastructure. It outlines ' Planning and providing social and physical infrastructure that ensures the provision of quality, integrated services and programs for children, young people and families' as one of the Local Government's role.

It also provides 4 objectives and associated actions to support the positive development of children, young people and families, listed below:

Objective 1 Provide services and programs that promote positive wellbeing and development	Priority Actions 1.0. Deliver quality programs and services that promote children, young people and families': a. Positive health, development and identity b. Sense of community and safety c. Connection to place, heritage, diversity and natural environment.
Objective 2 Identify and respond to the needs of children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability or risk	Priority Actions  2.0. Advocate for more access to local specialist services in response to emerging issues including:  a. Health and wellbeing (physical / mental)  b. Youth disengagement and its contributing factors  c. Family violence  d. Developmental vulnerability.
Objective 3 Work in partnership to strengthen service delivery and advocacy	Priority Actions 3.0. Seek opportunities and funding to coordinate projects, planning, and frameworks for the middle years. 3.1. Facilitate and advocate for well-planned, integrated infrastructure that supports access, participation and connection. 3.2. Enhance the use of data and analytics to: a. make better decisions b. measure community outcomes c. share insights with the community and our partners
Objective 4 Provide children, young people and families with	Priority Actions 4.0 Engage with children, young people and families to ensure their voices inform decision making. This includes engaging traditionally under-represented groups and increasing

opportunities to	community engagement and decision making with
inform decisions and	Aboriginal children, young people and community.
connect with the	4.1. Develop fast and user-friendly ways of sharing information
community	with the community, service providers and other key
	stakeholders.

### Spaces 8 to 12+: Creating Engaging Places for Young People 2013-2018

The main purpose of the City of Whittlesea's Spaces 8 to 12+: Creating Engaging Places for Young People is to encourage public realm design to consider the needs of young people (ages 12-25) and older children in their middle years (ages 8-12). The report argues that they not only have the right to have access to age appropriate, engaging and challenging places but also to be actively involved and consulted regarding their provision.

Changes in the health of young people such as increasing obesity rates, decreased physical activity and increasing mental health concerns as well as decreased independent mobility owing to parental fears has highlighted the need for a shift in governance and the planning and design process to create more Child Friendly Cities and encourage a move back to safer pedestrianised and connected communities.

Spaces 8 to 12+ outlines five principles for designing places and spaces for young people. The views of young people and related research are detailed under each principle and linked to best practice responses and resources. The five principles identified are as follows:

- 1. Accessible: Creating the public realm that is accessible to all young people
  - Young people are able to walk, cycle or use public transport to access places to meet the needs of their everyday life
  - All young people have opportunities, including those managing social, cultural or economic barriers
  - Public spaces are interconnected with safe, fully accessible links.
- 2. Diverse: Diversity of uses for diverse young people
  - Provision that encourages activity at different times of the day, for different purposes, and generates interaction in the community between young people of varying ages, interests, identities, abilities and cultures
  - Facilitates the self-expression of young people.
- 3. Inclusive: Making the public realm socially inclusive and connected for young people
  - Young people have the right to feel connection with the community through places, to feel valued, accepted and welcomed
  - Young people have a role in influencing what happens
  - Developmentally young people need gathering places to interact socially.
- 4. Safe: The public realm must enable young people to feel safe and to be safe
  - All young people must be enabled to move in public places independently and with confidence.
- 5. Engaged: Young people are experts on things related to young people

 Young people should have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the planning and designing of all aspects of the public realm.

### **Greening Whittlesea**

The City of Whittlesea's Greening Whittlesea Strategy was developed following consultation with a broad range of stakeholders representing our community, the Wurundjeri Narrap Team, state government and agencies, special interest and environmental groups, local business including developers, academics, industry specialists, and Council officers. Consultation on this strategy reinforced our community's strong connection to, and love of, the City's natural environment, which was communicated through the Whittlesea 2040 consultation process.

This report outlines Thomastown with 7.02% tree canopy cover which 3.91% falls on the non-council land (private, other Government Agencies, and Crown Land). It also identifies Epping, Lalor and Thomastown with the lowest green cover among the established urban suburbs.

The report also proposes increasing the size of City of Whittlesea's city forest which is dependent on the availability of land unencumbered by existing infrastructure such as buildings, roads, paths, playgrounds, sports fields and courts, and water bodies which is called a plantable area. 31.52% of Thomastown is identified as a plantable area with 9.64% on the Council and 21.88% on non council owned land.

The strategy outlines the vision for the city:

Our residents and our environment benefit from a diverse, colourful, and healthy City Forest that connects people to people to nature, and people to place.

Delivery of the Greening Whittlesea City Forest Strategy will be guided by a detailed implementation plan outlining the actions required to realise our strategic goals and targets over the life of the strategy. Council will prioritise making people's lives better by improving liveability within connected communities across our city. The hierarchy of principles below will be applied.

- (1) Our first priority is to provide benefit at the local level.
- (2) Our second priority is to provide benefit at the suburb level.
- (3) Our third priority is to provide benefit at the regional level.

The followings have been identified as priorities for action in established urban areas.

- Targeted greening to deliver liveability improvements, especially heat mitigation.
- Protect existing trees and green cover.

Other priorities for action across the City related to open space design and planning are listed below:

- Identify and implement appropriate controls to protect existing vegetation in waterway corridors.
- Incorporate decision-making criteria into work processes to ensure existing mature trees are not removed until all possible solutions to protect the trees are exhausted.
- Record data for all existing and future trees on Council land in Council's asset management system, including species, size, canopy spread, and health/condition.
- Develop a City Landscape Masterplan to guide planting programs across the City.

- Develop an open space planting program guided by the City Landscape Masterplan and
  incorporating plantable opportunities analysis, increased park plantings, habitat connectivity,
  urban heat amelioration, better use of transmission easements, and greater planting around and
  within sporting facilities, wetlands, waterways, and reserves.
- Include increased greening (with emphasis on tree retention and planting) in all Urban Design Frameworks, Integrated Community Facilities Planning, Public Space Planning and New Works Public Space projects.
- Implement planting in line with the City Landscape Masterplan, and the Open Space and ten-year Street Tree Planting Programs.

### **Equal and Safe Strategy 2019**

The City of Whittlesea's Equal and Safe Strategy 2019 is an integrated strategy that will continue to build the recognition and understanding across the organisation and community that gender inequality is the driver of violence against women and will shape Council's work in improving gender equality.

The work undertaken through this Strategy will contribute to three of the four goals in Whittlesea 2040: A Place for All:

Goal 1 – Connected community

- A socially cohesive community
- A healthy and safe community
- A participating community

### Goal 2 – Liveable neighbourhoods

• Well-designed neighbourhoods and vibrant town centres

### Goal 3: Strong Local Economy

- Increased local employment
- Successful, innovative local businesses

The strategy has listed factors that can increase the harms of violence against women and family violence. Two of the factors which are relevant to open spaces are as follows:

Sports and Recreation Settings - Sports, active recreation, social and leisure spaces are an important setting because these environments can have a powerful influence on gender relations through their modelling of attitudes, behaviours and social norms. Sporting contexts can reinforce gender inequities if they are male-dominated and exclude women and girls. By increasing gender equality in these settings, local government can reach a large proportion of people in the community. Sports, active recreation and social settings receive significant funding and resources from Council and the State Government. It is crucial that everyone in the community is able to benefit from this investment.

Facilities and infrastructure - Consideration of equity and diversity during planning and development can have a significant bearing on the extent of women's economic, social and civic participation and also on access to facilities, transport and public spaces. Council provides a wide range of essential infrastructure

including vital social infrastructure and community facilities and makes land use planning decisions that affect the community's use, access and experiences.

Beyond the evidence base, this Strategy was developed with input from key local service agencies and community members which strengthened the understanding of local issues, complexities and priorities. A qualitative survey was conducted with community members, asked *What changes would you like to see locally in order to achieve an equal, safe and respectful community?* The feedback received categorised in different themes. The following two themes are applicable to open spaces such as Nick Ascenzo Reserve and public realm.

### • Women's safety in public realm

A very common theme emerging from the community surveys was women's safety in public realm. Respondents described their vision for an equal, safe and respectful community being one where women could "go for a walk at night without the fear of being hurt", where women and girls "would feel safe walking through my neighbourhood at day and night" and "without harassment" and where "I could walk home from the train without worrying about whether it is safe". Respondents referred to "walkable streets connecting neighbourhoods" with "more lights", "toilets... in public spaces", public places such as shopping centres which should "reduce the gender stereotyping of how they also advertise" and provide "change facilities that are accessible to men and women". Safety in public realm was linked to the need to develop active bystander behaviours in the community — "people looking out for each other and standing up together to combat racism, sexism and hatred in public places".

### • Equal access to recreation and sport

Respondents to the community survey described sport and recreation settings as key environments for gender equality, safety and respect. From basic needs such as "separate change rooms in sporting clubs" to "more female friendly clubs", "better female facilities", "equity of access to facilities" and "less stereotypes of genders – females work in the canteen". What is clear from these responses is that the community value the role Council has in providing environments and settings for sport and recreation but that these environments need to be more accessible to and inclusive of women and girls.

This Strategy has identified four (4) Objectives and Priority Actions. The objective 3 and associated actions which are relevant to open spaces are as follows:

<u>Objective 3</u> - Ensure that community facilities and public spaces enable safe and gender equitable access and an active community life for all.

### **Priority Actions**

- a. Build a gendered community safety approach into Council's master-planning for public realm, reserves and facility development
- b. Include gender equity criteria in the process of prioritising and planning capital works
- c. Improve employment, recreation and safety outcomes for women and girls through the review of public realm and land use planning strategic documents.

These objectives and priority actions will be implemented by the organisation through annual action plans. The impacts of the Strategy and action plans will be evaluated in line with Council's Evaluation Framework.

### Disability Action Plan 2017-2021

The City of Whittlesea Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2017-2021 details how Council will work with the community to meet the vision of an inclusive municipality where people of all abilities are encouraged and enabled to lead satisfying, fulfilling and contributory lives. The Disability Act Victoria 2006 requires each Local Government to develop a DAP. Section 38 of the Act states that a public sector body must ensure that a DAP is prepared for the purpose of:

- Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- Reducing barriers to obtaining employment
- Promoting inclusion and participation in the community
- Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

The Disability Action Plan is underpinned by the following principles:

- A. The actions will be shaped and driven by the people for whom it has relevance,
- B. Access to contributory living through the development of inclusive communities is the right of everyone who lives, works, studies, attends events or visits the City of Whittlesea,
- C. Universal access is fundamental to all community facilities and premises, 26 in The City of Whittlesea,
- D. Access to wellbeing, education and meaningful employment are universal rights,
- E. Council will advocate for and collaborate with all levels of government as well as with community agencies for the best possible outcomes for people with disabilities, their families and friends, and;
- F. Progress on actions and outcomes will be monitored and regularly reported to Council and the community.

### **Relevant Actions**

4.3.2 Investigate the development of Playground communication signage at parks and gardens across the municipality for use by people with autism.

Regarding Nick Ascenzo Reserve, the steepness of east side of Boronia street along Nick Ascenzo Reserve, presents a challenge in creating a DDA compliant footpath.

### Signage Management Plan

The City of Whittlesea's Signage Management Plan provides a well-designed, cost-effective and contemporary suite of Council signage, along with clear guidelines and templates for its delivery across various locations within the municipality, including civic buildings, parks and reserves, shopping precincts and gateway locations.

The signage family is categorised into types, based on signage purpose to assist developers, planners and designers in selecting and determining their signage needs. These include:

- Municipal Identity
- Precinct Identity
- Wayfinding
- Site ID
- Notifications.

These sign types also consider three main types of users and their modality to guide selection of the most appropriate sign type:

- Pedestrian
- Bicycle
- Vehicle

The plan describes the planning, design, approvals and implementation process for new and replacement signage in Whittlesea. It also provides principles of placement to aid accessibility and legibility for users of all abilities, as follows:

- 1. Identify the areas where signs are needed
- 2. Find the best location in those areas
- 3. Determine the best orientation for the sign

Factors to consider optimising accessibility:

- Position signs free of visual obstructions and in optimum sight lines that are free to access by foot, wheelchair or mobility scooter.
- Place wayfinding signage consistently at decision points to provide assurance to users.
- Over signing can be confusing and discouraging for users.
- Remove obsolete or redundant signage that may be misleading.
- An appropriately sited sign should be obvious but not dominant.

It also provides information regarding signage selection. Selecting the most appropriate sign type for a location is a key part of the process. Having considered the primary user and viewing scale for a sign, it is important to identify a signs general location and the type of information it will provide.

In regards to Sign Purpose, the following purposes have been Identified for signs in open space:

- Secondary Wayfinding
- Tertiary Wayfinding
- Site ID / Destination (at minor and mid destinations)
- Notifications and Information (for various sites)a

Additionally, the plan provides a guide to appropriate text height viewing distances for pedestrians, cyclists motor vehicle users. The table below outline the appropriate text height for pedestrians as a more applicable option for open spaces.

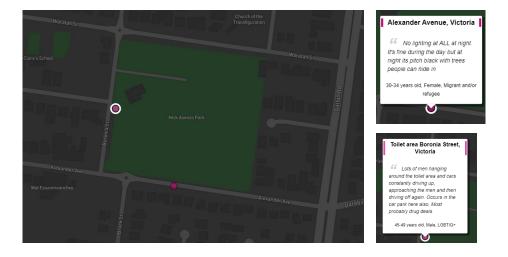
Required Viewing	Minimum Text X-
Distance	height
2 metres	6 millimetres
4 metres	12 millimetres
6 metres	20 millimetres
8 metres	25 millimetres
12 metres	40 millimetres
15 metres	50 millimetres
25 metres	80 millimetres
35 metres	100 millimetres
40 metres	130 millimetres
50 metres	150 millimetres

The plan has also reviewed Thomastown Recreation & Aquatic Centrea as a case study to audit the existing signage throughout the sites and offer new signage locations, that considers: Audience & modality, Purpose & message, Facilities & services, Location & prominence and Scale of site. The case studies also provide visualisations of indicative signage, demonstrating their siting, location, messaging and purpose. this can be applicable to parks/reserves master plan development.

### **Your Ground Project 2021**

Your Ground is a collaboration between Crowd Spot and Monash University's XYX Lab to crowd-source women and gender-diverse people safety related experiences of public and recreational space. Two pins were recorded by the community indicated low levels of perceived safety around Alexander Avenue, as follows:

- No lighting at ALL at night. It's fine during the day but at night its pitch black with trees people can hide in.
- Lots of men hanging around the toilet area and cars constantly driving up, approaching the men and then driving off again. Occurs in the car park here also. Most probably drug deals.



### Natural and Built Shade Policy 2016

The City of Whittlesea's Natural and Built Shade Policy outlines Council's commitment to taking a preventative approach to protecting the community from over-exposure to ultra violet radiation (UVR) through the adequate provision of best practice public facilities and environments that provide shade and shelter, particularly in high risk areas such as early years facilities, playspaces and outdoor community gathering spaces. Another of the key policy principles includes the prioritisation of the provision of canopy trees and urban forest where possible, to provide shade as well as help reduce pollution, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and improve social and mental wellbeing.

### Park Lighting Strategy 2006

The City of Whittlesea Park Lighting Strategy provides a strategic framework for the inclusion of lighting within public open space areas. The Strategy also provides direction for Council in relation to the provision of lighting in existing open space areas, should the need be identified. In this case, the level of implementation will be subject to available Council funding.

According to the Park Lighting Strategy, Nick Asceznzo Reserve is considered as a Local/Neighbourhood park, and the strategy recommends that the provision of lighting within Council's neighbourhood parks should not be considered except in isolated cases, where there is a demonstrated need for after hour recreational pursuits such as walking or exercise trails or where a case may exist for the illumination of a path within a neighbourhood park where that path is utilised as a high traffic thoroughfare connecting an area of high night time pedestrian access.

The strategy provides guiding principles for the provision of lighting in public open spaces:

- Provide a strategic framework for the installation of lighting in Council's open space areas.
- Promote, comfortable and safe use of parks.
- Enhance the perception of Whittlesea's parks and open space as a major asset.
- Make a contribution to the legibility of the Council's major open space areas at night.

- Create memorable and individual images of the parks and open space at night.
- Improve the attractiveness of parks and open space for regular night activities and occasional festive events.
- Consider new lighting technologies, environmental initiatives and sensible efficiencies in the running costs associated with these technologies.

### Lighting for Shared User paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles, City of Whittlesea - Arup 2022

Lighting for Shared User paths presents the culmination of a 10 month project to develop a set of high level guiding principles using an evidence based, co-design approach to improve perceptions of community safety after dark through informing and influencing lighting design outcomes in the City of Whittlesea.

The recommendations in this document reflect high level considerations towards providing gender-inclusive night time amenity across Shared User Paths in the City of Whittlesea.

The guideline provides site specific design considerations when implementing the guiding principles for lighting to improve perceptions of community safety.

The following should be considered in relation to parks and passive recreational use such as fog-off leash areas:

- How can lighting work to increase visibility and sense of personal safety?
- Are there areas in which lighting can facilitate a better experience of the space, travelling through or long term enjoyment?
- How active will this park be during the later hours? Will the lighting levels vary as the usage of the space declines?

Lighting for Shared User paths outlines five principles to improve perceptions of community safety with light. These principles reflect in-depth qualitative and quantitative analyses of night time experiences in three representative Shared User Paths in the City of Whittlesea. The five principles identified are as follows:

- Guiding Beacons of Light
  - o Marker, or 'glowing' lights to indicate changes and variations in pathways.
  - o Highlighted landmarks to help orientate the user in the space and improve wayfinding
  - Warmer colour temperatures more welcoming than cold colour temperatures and multi coloured lights
- Considered Lighting Context
  - o High uniformity of lighting across a site is preferred as it is less dramatic and distracting.
  - o Implement transitional lighting spaces with a gradual change of brightness
  - Subtle ambient light is preferred over harsh bright light
- Brightness Journeys
  - o Implement lighting during reasonable functional hours outside daytime hours

- Efficient solar lighting is a desirable design outcome for implementation
- o Lighting of a whole pathway is not required to improve spaces at night
- More Consistent Lighting
  - o Highlight amenities and material qualities of a space for visual clarity and safety
  - o Light gaps and dark corners to enable awareness of environment
  - Light up dark spaces to increase feelings of safety
- Layers of Light
  - o Implement uplighting and diffused lighting for a more organic glowing quality
  - Light to vertical surfaces as a visual aid for people with vision impairment
  - Light at varying levels which covers planting, pathways and approaching figures

### AusNet services, A guide to living with transmission line easements

The guideline specifies restrictions on easement use. In general, restrictions limit the use of easements to mainly ground level activities. The guideline rerefer to prevent hazards from powerlines that may result from reduced clearances, fire, impact or an explosion from any activity on the easement.

The guideline specifies permitted and prohibited uses of transmission line easements. The more relevant uses to Nick Ascenzo are underlines.

Permitted uses of transmission line easements:

- Grazing and agriculture.
- Market gardens, orchards and horticultural nurseries, excluding buildings.
- Water storage dams, subject to sufficient clearances from conductors and towers.
- Trees and shrubs with a mature growth height not exceeding three metres.
- Vegetation density is generally restricted to scattered trees or limited area clumps and shelter belts to control the total quantity of burnable materials on the easement.
- A tree clear area of 20 metres radius is generally required at tower sites for line maintenance purposes. Closer trees may be permitted in some locations where the interference caused to access and essential line maintenance is acceptable. However, a greater clearance area is required at future tower sites to provide for construction of new transmission lines.
- Landscaping and paving, subject to sufficient clearances to the conductors and towers if changes to the natural surface levels are proposed.
- Non-metallic fences up to three metres in height. Metallic fences, or fences incorporating metallic materials, must be suitably earthed and sectionalised and are subject to AusNet Services' approval.
- Sewerage, drainage and water pipes constructed of earthenware or plastic materials, but no closer than 20 metres to towers.
- Parking of sedan and utility types of vehicles. Barriers of an approved design may be required to protect towers from damage by vehicles.

- Tennis courts on 500 kV and 330 kV easements subject to certain specific requirements. Please contact AusNet Services for fencing requirements and further information.
- Tennis courts on 220 kV line easements, provided that earthed metal net posts are used. An
  elevated earthed umpire's chair is also permitted, provided that it is earthed, of all-metal
  construction, with a metal screen above the seating position. Perimeter fences should also be
  earthed. Please contact AusNet Services for earthing requirements and further information.
- Ground level sporting activities, such as football, cricket, golf, basketball and netball, subject to special requirements regarding the design of fences, goals and lights.
- Lighting poles, subject to sufficient clearance to the conductors and towers. The power supply must be underground and the lighting poles must lower to the ground for servicing.
- Playground equipment, subject to a 1 metre maximum height limit.
- For 220 kV line easements only car, boat and trailer sales yards, excluding buildings.

### Prohibited uses of transmission line easements:

- Houses, other buildings and structures, including eaves, awnings, <u>canopies</u>, <u>shelters and the like</u>.
   For 220 kV line easements only, domestic garages (non-habitable), carports and garden sheds MAY be permitted a limited distance onto the easement subject to a number of requirements being met. These include sufficient safety clearance to towers and overhead conductors; three metre maximum height; construction made largely of non-flammable materials and not attached to a dwelling.
- Erection of scaffolding.
- Swimming pools, both above and below the ground, including filtration equipment.
- Storage of materials in industrial type waste bins and skips.
- Stockpiling of excavated materials.
- Storage or handling of flammable liquids or gases. For 500 kV easements only, the storage or handling of such liquids or gases from bulk delivery vehicles is not permitted within 60 metres of the centreline of the transmission line.
- Fuelling of and repairs to vehicles, plant and equipment.
- Use of vehicles and equipment such as cranes, excavators, elevated working platforms and the like exceeding three metres in operating height.
- Parking of large trucks and caravans (traversing or crossing easements is permitted).
- Loading, unloading and load adjustment of large trucks.
- Operation of large water spray irrigators of the gun type.
- Metal pipes (including reinforced concrete), power cables and other electrically conductive materials within 30 metres of any tower steelwork.
- For 220 kV easements only, this minimum distance reduces to 20 metres.

• Electrical detonation or storage of explosives including fireworks.

### AusNet services, Your guide to planting near electricity lines

The guideline specifies several key points regarding planting vegetation on transmission easements, including:

- Choose species that have a maximum maturity height of no more than three metres.
- Trees or shrubs should be scattered or clumped across the easement (an overall vegetative cover for mature trees and shrubs of up to 10 per cent is acceptable).
- Vehicle access along the easement should not be inhibited.
- As maintenance vehicle access is required, only grasses or low growing vegetation should be planted within a distance of 20 metres from each tower centre.
- In special circumstances, such as in gullies or watercourses, these requirements may be varied.
   Contact AusNet Services for guidance.
- When planting adjacent to, but not on an easement, make sure the vegetation will not impede vehicle access or pose a fire risk if it were to fall onto the easement.
- Low-growing species, with a mature height of no more than three metres, can be planted within seven metres of the line.
- For trees outside the seven metre zone, plant them at such distances so that if they do blow over, they will not fall on the lines. For example, a 10 metre tall tree should be planted at least 13 metre from the lines.
- As you approach mid-span (the mid-point of the line between two poles), gradually increase the distances between the powerline and any tree or shrub by an extra three metres.
- Do not plant vegetation within three metres of powerpoles

Indigenous species have been highlighted in this guideline as appropriate to plant near transmission lines and distribution powerlines. They have been chosen for their low growing height. this guideline provides a table with some suitable indigenous plants indicating the plants' growth habits and botanical zones.

The provided species should be considered in the detailed design of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

AGENDA - Scheduled Council Meeting 21 November 2023



Appendix 2

**Community Engagement** 

## **Appendix 2**

# Alexander Avenue Shopping Precinct Revitalisation

Phase 1 Participation and Engagement Findings Report
September 2022

### Introduction

The City of Whittlesea established the Town Centre Revitalisation Program 2021-2025 to have a structured approach to revitalising local and neighbourhood centres. The program addresses the key action of "Design and upgrade local streetscapes and shopping precincts to make it easier to move about, celebrate local culture, heritage and character, and connect people to the natural environment" identified in Council's Community Plan 2021-25.

Alexander Avenue, Thomastown has been recognised as a high priority site in the Town Centre Revitalisation Program, with opportunities identified to improve social spaces, walkability and connectivity, safety, and greening.

In May 2021, the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group made up of community members, traders and the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School, together with Bronwyn Halfpenny MP, Member for Thomastown met with Council Directors and staff to share their concerns for the area. Key concerns raised included a lack of investment in the area, poor perceptions of safety and a lack of safe pedestrian crossings for young people (and the general public) crossing between the school, park and shops. Following this meeting Council committed to investigate improvements in the area. Since then, Council has:

- Undertaken surveys to analyse traffic movement and the movement of school students in the area.
- Following feedback from local traders, car parking hours have been altered in some areas around the shops.
- Engaged with other business areas across Council to help the project team to understand the project scope, challenges and opportunities.

The community will be consulted on the revitalisation of Alexander Avenue shopping precinct and Nick Ascenzo Reserve in three phases:

- Phase 1 capturing challenges and opportunities of the site COMPLETED
- Phase 2 presentation of concept design options for feedback First half of 2023
- Phase 3 construction process Second half of 2023

## How we engaged you

The Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation program consultation was open for community feedback from 1 to 31 August 2022.

During this period the project team held 1-on-1 conversations and conducted a survey of Alexander Avenue traders, a workshop and site visit with Thomastown East Primary School student leaders and Principal on 26 August and a community pop-up stall on-site from 3-7pm on Friday 26 August to capture Friday night trade at the take-away stores. Visitors were informed of the consultation and the project team captured feedback on their experiences with the reserve.

Residents within 700m were letterbox dropped in early August to inform them of the consultation and encourage them to share their feedback through the community consultation by attending the community pop-up or on the project page on the Engage Whittlesea platform.

Visitors to the shops were alerted to the consultation through posters that were placed in the windows of Alexander Avenue businesses.

The community consultation and community pop-up was shared on Councils social channels including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The seven posts (three on Facebook) were viewed by a combined total of 23,452, with 1,563 of these people interacting with it in some way (sharing, commenting or leaving a reaction).

Subscribers to the Engage Whittlesea platform that had previously indicated an interest in arts, culture and community; planning, design and infrastructure; roads, paths and transport and/or the Thomastown area were notified via email of the new project page (total 466 subscribers). Of these, 290 recipients read the email with 30, or 6 percent clicking through to view the Alexander Avenue engage page.

The project Engage page featured two consultation activities, a survey and a pinpoint map. The survey captured feedback on how respondents use the area as well as any insights on how we could best improve the area. The pinpoint map enables respondents to drop a pin and make a comment on a specific point within the project area and provide feedback or an improvement idea for that particular point.

At in-person consultations respondents were presented with six key themes and asked to rank the areas they felt needed change/improvement the most.

### **Participation**

Feedback was received from 144 participants including traders in the activity centre, residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods, visitors to the shops and Nick Ascenzo Reserve as well as the students, their parents, and staff members of Thomastown East Primary School. This feedback is valuable to the City of Whittlesea to understand the community's concerns as well as their ideas and aspirations for the activity centre.

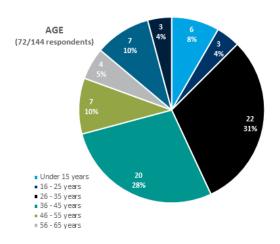
The Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation page on Council's Engage platform attracted 656 views and saw 85 contributions made including 73 surveys and 12 pins dropped on the interactive map.

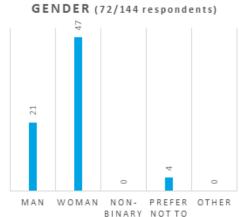
The planned online workshop with the Enhancement Group didn't go ahead due to low attendance, instead the project team successfully engaged in 1:1 conversations with eight of the nine Alexander Avenue traders who also completed the survey.

An online workshop was scheduled for the evening of Monday 15 August, however like the Enhancement Group session this did not go ahead as there were no pre-registrations recorded.

On Friday 26 August the project team met with the Principal of Thomastown East Primary along with 19 student leaders. That evening the project team held a community pop-up onsite that was attended by 56 community members including an additional six young people who together made 56 priority votes and dropped 24 pins on the pinpoint map.

Participants in the consultation activities were of all ages, providing insight into the requirements and priorities of different age groups. Majority of participants were aged 26-45 years old and over half were women. Participants were typically from Thomastown and Lalor, but some also travelled from Bundoora, Epping, Mernda, Wollert, and Mill Park.





### What we heard

Overall, we heard that the area's infrastructure is degrading and in need of repair, paths and carparking areas do not meet current standards of compliance and existing land uses in the precinct can be better connected. Residents and visitors perceive the area as 'unsafe', 'uninviting' and 'dull'.

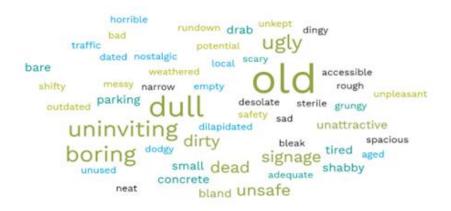
ANSWER

Our community engagement highlighted three main points.

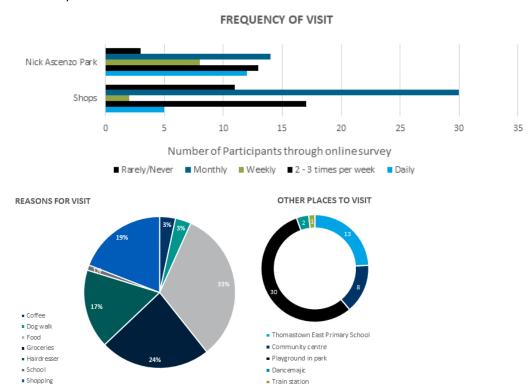
- There are poor perceptions of safety in the area (such as lack of lighting at nighttime, poor passive surveillance and open views, lack of activities/things to do near the shops).
- Pedestrian safety and access is a concern of the community and traders; and
- Any improvement would be supported, especially those designed to activate the area (such as outdoor dining or public art).

Participants were asked to describe the area with three different words, the below wordcloud represents these visually, the more a word was mentioned the bigger it is.

NICK ASCENZO RESERVE MASTER PLAN | OPEN SPACE PLANNING CITY OF WHITTLESEA | APPENDIX 2



Residents and visitors including the parents of students accessing nearby Thomastown East Primary School use the shopping strip. People who visit the shops (63), do so once a month (30) or a couple of times a week (17). Many (11) do not visit the shops at all due to number of reasons such as a lack of options for shopping and activities and safety concerns. The infrequent visits from the community have reduced foot traffic in the area, coupled with inadequate lighting have led to sharp decrease in the perception of safety among the community.



The shops are frequented by the participants to buy takeaway food (33%), groceries (24%), flowers and other items (19%) and visit the hairdresser (17%) and by parents dropping children off to school (1%). Due to the nature of these visits, time spent at the shopping

Rating Scale 0-5

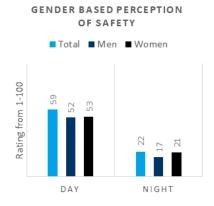


strip ranges from a few minutes to an hour, except for hairdressing appointments, which could last up to a few hours.

Participants were asked to rate the shops and the reserve on a scale of 1 (negative) to 5 (positive). Most participants felt that the shops and streetscape lacked amenity. Safety concerns also added to a low rating of the area. Nick Ascenzo reserve is not frequented by many of the community due to poor upkeep and a lack of diverse activities.

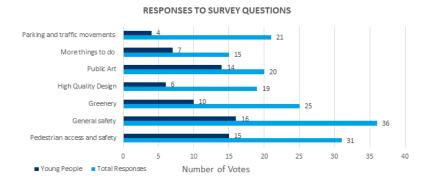
Rating Scale 0-5

Participants were asked to rate their perception of safety on a scale from 0 (unsafe) to 100 (safe) during the day and at night. Perception of safety was moderate during the day (50%) and was especially low during the night (around 20%).



General safety and lighting were the key issues identified by traders. Almost half of the traders were women and the perception of safety among them was especially low. This is predominantly due to inadequate lighting, anti-social activities in front of the shops and in the park, obstructed sight lines, a recent assault at IGA and a history of ramraiding and burglary across the shops.

Traders reported a lack of activity in the area, speeding, poor access to the park and carparking area on Boronia Street. The traders would like to see better cleanliness measures, fit for purpose parking spaces/times and opportunities for outdoor dining activities. Better street furniture, lighting, trees and planters and activities such as a playground, were identified as ideas to attract more people and improve the area.



Council staff members including Urban Design, Youth Services and Community Development walked with 19 Thomastown East Primary School students and their principal to the shops to gain perspectives of what mattered to young people in the area. Young people used a different colour dot to differentiate their priorities during the more general in-person engagement also. Younger participants were keen to see more public art in the space as well as more activities within the shopping strip and around the reserve that were relevant to their age group.



Image 01: Urban Design, Youth Services and Community Development Officers discussing issues and opportunities with Thomastown East Primary School students and Principal.



Image 02: Dark areas of carparking and park at night time.

## Opportunities and concerns

The community felt that general safety was a priority, people have been assaulted in the area. Traders, especially women, feel unsafe working after dark. Pedestrian safety was

another key concern as many incidents of speeding, ramraiding and improper usage of the open space in the park to drive vehicles have been noted by community.

"Looks run down and not safe." – Community member

They also prioritise greenery and shade to make it easier to walk, making the precinct cooler during summer, and increase its visual appearance. The community also indicated that high quality street furniture coupled with provisions for outdoor dining would make the shopping strip attractive for locals and visitors.

A key concern of the community was the potential increase in traffic flow due to the renewal of the shopping strip which would attract more people as well as a potential threat to pedestrians crossing the roads as there are no crossings in the area currently. The pinpoint map highlighted opportunities for reducing car parking spaces to create space for outdoor dining, seating areas for the people to gather, greenery and planter boxes and trees to upgrade the strip.

Respondents of all genders identified that greenery, general safety and pedestrian access and safety were the most important themes to address.



# Shopping precinct Issues and Opportunities summary

## Issues with general safety

Comments and ideas:

- Uniform lighting over the entire area to prevent dark spots.
- Layered lighting, directional lighting as per requirement (with reference to Arup's LSUP (internal).
- Façade improvements.
- Improve passive surveillance and sight lines through shops and park.
- Investigate empty shop front activation options.
- Public toilets in Nick Ascenzo considered unsafe and poor design.

## Issues with pedestrian access and safety:

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- · Comments and ideas:
- Footpath across easement is a tripping hazard.
- Pedestrian crossing between shopping strip and reserve.
- Concrete strip/access point from Boronia Street carpark.

"Ideally a marked crossing from the opposite side of the road to get to the shops, especially due to cars coming from around the corner from Brock St, it makes it hard to cross safely" – Community Member

## Issues with greenery

### Comments and ideas:

- Increase tree cover in and around the shopping strip for shade and visual appeal.
- Increase the greenery of the precinct as well to make it a bit more aesthetically pleasing.

### Issues with high quality designs

### Comments and ideas:

- Introduce street furniture that responds to the current needs of the community.
- Install bins at better locations.
- Council's level of maintenance is considered poor.

"Keep it Thommo! Keep it concrete!" – Community Member

## Needing more things to do

### Comments and ideas:

- Space for youth centric activities skateboarding, tennis, cricket, futsal etc. near the shops.
- Outdoor dining activities to increase opportunities for socialization.

"Create bigger paths outside shops to create opportunity for outdoor dining. Could bring in better restaurants or gelati shop/cafe. There aren't many good cafes in the area enjoyed by a greater number of young families coming into the area." – Community Member

## Issues with parking and traffic movement

### Comments and ideas:

- Increase parking time for patrons running longer errands.
- New elements in road to minimise speeding in the area and create slower streets.
- Rethink parking spots and times.
- Bollards / hostile vehicle mitigation.
- Stop cars driving in park.

### **Public Art**

NICK ASCENZO RESERVE MASTER PLAN | OPEN SPACE PLANNING CITY OF WHITTLESEA | APPENDIX 2

### Comments and ideas:

 Incorporate murals on blank walls and introduce other forms of public art such as sculptures, paving patterns etc to liven up the space.

## Nick Ascenzo Reserve issues and opportunities

## Issues with general safety

### Comments and ideas:

- Lighting issues.
- Larger bushes need trimming/replanting with less foliage.
- Activities or design that prevents people from misusing large empty spaces.
- Toilet block feels unsafe.

### Issues with greenery

### Comments and ideas:

- Open/clear out bushes in the reserve, trees with low foliage density.
- Create possum boxes etc. on trees.

### Maintenance and Upkeep

### Comments and ideas:

- Better pathways.
- Lawn needs to be cleaned/ free of litter, broken glass.

"The paths need to be paved, we walk our dog here and the paths are gross and muddy especially when it rains. It is very deserted and sad looking, could do with fencing and some landscaping for a good dog park." — Community Member

"Always lots of rubbish, broken glass, the lawn is usually not well looked after." – Community Member.

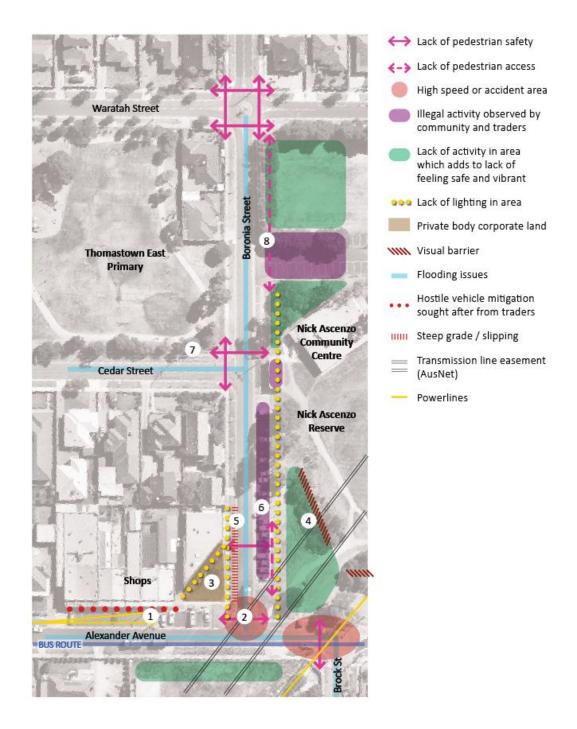
### Lack of activities

### Comments and ideas:

- Space for youth centric activities skateboarding, tennis, cricket etc.
- Seating and BBQ area.
- Urban agriculture/community gardens (social enterprises may also be interested in urban agriculture area)
- Scouts Hall not very well utilised.
- Bocce court is not utilised for intended use, currently used as informal dog park.

## Challenges summarised

The below map summarises key challenges identified in this report that can be addressed through streetscape redesign. Further discussions with Council staff and subject matter experts will be undertaken to identify which challenges are a priority to address in a streetscape concept design and achievable within a reasonable budget.





Two power poles (one high voltage) exist within the shopfront streetscape.



Intersection of Alexander Ave and Boronia Street is wide and encourages speeding. Pedestrian crossing point is also not direct, with no safe pedestrian access between the Boronia carparking and shops.



Triangle grassed area on corner of Alexander and Boronia is privately owned body corporate.



Shrub planting creates visual barrier into the park, making it feel unsafe and unwelcoming. People cannot see what others are doing in the park - which could draw people in.



Steep crossfall and grass between shops and Boronia carpark causing slipping incidents.



Dark environment at night time on Boronia Street carpark and shopfronts, creating poor peceptions of safety.



Crossing from primary school to shops and Nick Ascenzo Reserve have children crossing unattended.



Steep crossfall and lack of footpath along western edge of reserve. The reserve also has a lack of uses along it's western edge, resulting in a lack of activity and passive surveillance.

## Next steps

Thank you to everyone that completed the survey, dropped a pin, and participated in the community engagement.

Feedback gathered from the community is being used to develop the design of the streetscape upgrade and will be incorporated into the decision-making process The project team will seek to develop a plan that addresses the issues raised and balances these with the broader needs of the community.

A draft concept design will be presented in the second phase of community consultation, providing an opportunity for the community to see how the feedback provided has helped shape the concept design. The draft concept design will need to be endorsed by Council to proceed to community consultation

## Appendix Item 1 – Trader Issues and Opportunities

# Key issues identified by traders

### General safety

- Observations of antisocial behaviour in the car park and park
- Inadequate lighting means the area is perceived as unsafe especially by female members of the community. It also facilitates anti-social behaviour and discourages visitors to the shop.
- Robberies reported at the shops, assault at IGA
- Overgrown landscaping around the reserve is inhabited by people after dark
- Area generally inactive at night.

# Opportunities identified by traders

### General safety

- Increase lighting around the shops
- Open/clear out bushes in the reserve, trees with low foliage density
- Integrate new uses (potentially something for young people) into the park near the shops – this could deter antisocial behaviour
- Increase active surveillance measures around shops by installing CCTV. It was
  highlighted with traders that CCTV isn't something Council generally offers as a
  service.

# Key issues identified by traders

### Pedestrian access and safety

- Frequent speeding around the corner of Alexander Avenue x Boronia Street
- Poor access from pedestrian pathways.
- People continue to slip on nature strip in between shops and Boronia Street
- Trucks hitting light poles when going around roundabout on Brock St
- No pedestrian access from carpark on east side of Boronia Street
- Ramraiding of shops in recent history
- Speeding in the area.

# Opportunities identified by traders

### Pedestrian access and safety

- 40 zone around shops flashing lights to show this
- Concrete strip/access point from Boronia Street carpark
- Zebra crossings and street designed to encourage slower speeds
- Bollards / hostile vehicle mitigation
- Close Boronia Street between school and Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

## Key issues identified by traders

### Car parking

- Not busy throughout the week, but during peak hours, parking is limited or not fit for purpose (i.e., hairdressers want 4-hour parking near their shop, takeaways want quicker parking)
- Traders parking there all day, they don't have anywhere to park their cars without getting booked.

## Opportunities identified by traders

### Car parking

- Can parking be reorganised to have parking on both sides of Alexander Ave
- More carparking, could Council purchase transmission easement
- Better parking times for uses at the shops.
- Trader permits.

# Key issues identified by traders

### Greenery

 The shopping does not have trees/ planters/ landscaping elements that improve amenity of the area.

# Opportunities identified by traders

### Greenery

- More Trees and nature to make the place feel nicer
- Beautification, nice light poles, pavers, planter boxes etc.

# Key issues identified by traders

### Lack of things to do

- The area lacks activities that are targeted towards young people such as skate parks, exercise, community sports
- Lack of coffee shop? More outdoor dining would be great, helps business

· Inactive during the night.

## Opportunities identified by traders

### Lack of things to do

- Coffee van spot near the shops to help activate, no café currently
- Playground / play items for kids, bring them to shops more, more people around for more reasons
- Offer space for outdoor dining and street trading
- Possibility of Council purchasing or activating vacant transmission easement.

# Key issues identified by traders

### Poor maintenance and poor-quality infrastructure

- Littering and rubbish
- Broken glass bottles and hazardous items lying around in the car park
- The condition of the area deters people from coming to the shops
- Cracks in road, foot paths and aging bins
- · Recently installed tables considered ugly, but they do get used.

## Opportunities identified by traders

### Poor maintenance and poor-quality infrastructure

- Install bins at better locations
- Check Council's level of maintenance
- Better seating, tables, umbrellas
- Improve design and quality of the area.

# Key issues identified by traders

### Wayfinding

- People are unaware of the shops resulting in low foot traffic
- No one would know there are shops here from Dalton Road.

# Opportunities identified by traders

# Wayfinding

- Better signage for shops
- Improve wayfinding to the shops from surrounding street network
- Improve lighting.

# Key issues identified by traders

### Visibility

• Don't clutter views/space – keep visibility open across the area

NICK ASCENZO RESERVE MASTER PLAN | OPEN SPACE PLANNING CITY OF WHITTLESEA | APPENDIX 2

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• Closed shops/roller doors make area unattractive.

# Key issues identified by traders

# Visibility

- Improve passive surveillance and sight lines through shops and park
- Clearer views across and into the park.
- Investigate empty shop front activation options

Seek options to work with shop owners to improve their facades.

# Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan

Phase 2 Participation and Engagement Findings Report
July 2023, Version 1

### Introduction

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is one of City of Whittlesea's open space reserves in Thomastown, an established area of the municipality. Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified as part of the Alexander Avenue Shopping Precinct Improvement Project, which will transform the precinct including, revitalisation of the town centre, neighbourhood open space and includes improvements to traffic management in the precinct. Phase 1 the Alexander Avenue Town Centre Revitalisation program was a 2020/21 Council Action Plan, that aims to improve the functionality, attractiveness, and vibrancy of local and neighbourhood town centres across the City of Whittlesea. Phase Two of precinct revitalisation is the Nick Ascenzo Reserve master plan development.

Feedback from the community and stakeholders will inform the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan. The engagement includes two phases: a) Phase One, Information Gathering, b) Phase Two, Draft Master Plan Exhibition.

Consultation phase 1, received diverse representation from a range of targeted stakeholders including Traders on Alexander Avenue, Thomastown East Primary School staff and parents, Community Activity Centre Users, Scouts, Visitors to the Shops and the community.

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council in identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and defining the key ideas for the reserve improvement.

The consultation was undertaken in August 2022, Nick Ascenzo Reserve feedback was captured as part of Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation engagement activities.

Consultation phase 2, was undertaken between the 19th of May 2023 to the 25th of June 2023 and involved engaging the broader community through pop-up sessions and on Council's digital engagement platform.

The purpose of this engagement was to receive community feedback on the Draft Alexander Avenue Streetscape and Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan to ensure that the future of the site reflects our community's needs. Council officers continued engagement with key stakeholders during phase two consultation.

The project engage page received 268 visitors with 33 community members providing feedback or completing the survey during the consultation period.

Increasing safety and accessibility in the area is a priority and the plans look to address these through better lighting, changes to the car parking, the upgrade and location of facilities including the play area and improving connection and visibility between the shopping precinct and reserve.

The draft master plan will guide the future development of the reserve and includes key recommendations that will create a safe and inclusive reserve to encourage people of all ages and abilities to access the park.

This report has been prepared by City of Whittlesea as part of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan project. It summarises the broader community and stakeholders consultation outcomes.

# How we engaged you

# Phase 1: Community consultation to inform the draft master plan (COMPLETED August 2022)

The project team met with key stakeholders including the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group, shopkeepers and regular users of Nick Ascenzo Community Centre to gather thoughts and ideas on what should be included in the master plan. We also consulted with community members including those who frequently visit and use the shops and reserve.

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council in identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and defining key ideas for the park improvement.

Following this consultation, a master plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve was developed to guide the future development of the reserve to create a safe and inclusive area for the community to enjoy.

# Phase 2: Present draft master plan to community for further feedback (19 May- 25 June 2023)

The community consultation was promoted trough a range of tactics including:

- Direct mail to adjacent property owners Residents within 400m of the Alexander Avenue precinct were letterbox dropped to inform them of the draft concept plan and master plan and encourage them to attend a pop-up session or provide feedback through the projects Engage pages.
- Email to previously consulted Alexander Avenue Shop Precinct traders Traders who
  participated in first phase of the consultation were emailed to inform them of the
  Draft Future Direction Plan and encourage them to provide feedback. In-person
  discussions were undertaken with traders.
- Social media The opportunity to participate in the engagement was also promoted on Council's social media channels including Facebook and Instagram with the combined reach of 13,585 across the five posts.

The draft master plan was presented to the community for feedback between 19 May and 25 June 2023. Community feedback was sought online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform and through direct conversation and activities at community-based pop-ups and key stakeholder meetings.

Council shared the key aspects of the master plan and asked the community whether they supported the draft master plan through a survey on the project Engage page that enabled participants to indicate their support of the plan using a rating scale from 'I like it a lot' to 'I don't like it at all' with five possible options. Participants also could identify any missed opportunities that could be added to the guidelines.

The project Engage pages offered the community the opportunity to view or download the draft master plan and featured FAQ sections for the projects.

The Nick Ascenzo design package included the draft master plan, high-level phase 1 consultation summary, high-level traffic study summary, and recommendations.

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an in-built translation tool to ensure that the information provided can be translated into the audience's preferred language to ensure it is understood.

Two Community pop-ups were held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June at the Nick Ascenzo Community Centre and the Alexander Avenue Street in front of shops.

Participants at community-based pop-ups were presented with the same key aspects of the draft master plan and offered the opportunity to undertake the same activity on large activity boards. This board posed the same question and possible responses as well as space to share any missed opportunities.

The project team met directly with key stakeholders including Alexander Avenue shopkeepers, the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School, the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group and regular users of Nick Ascenzo Community Centre. Stakeholders were briefed on the project, shown the draft plan and offered the opportunity to provide further feedback on the draft.

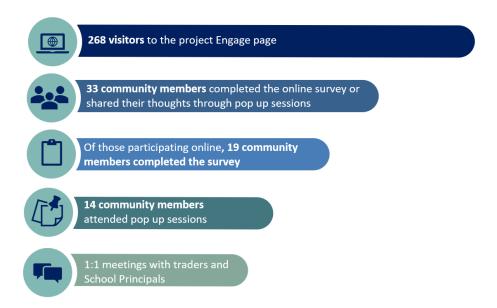


Image 01: Dot board activities used by the project team at the communitybased pop-ups

# **Participation**

The Nick Ascrenzo Reserve Master Plan page on Council's engage platform received 268 visitors with 19 community members completing the survey during the consultation period.

Council Officers spoke with a further 14 people at the two pop-ups, and had separate workshops with Alexander Avenue Shop Precinct traders and the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School. A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:



### What we heard

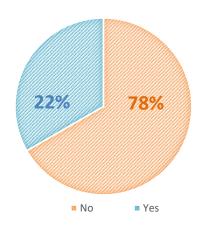
### **Survey Results**

This section provides results from the online surveys completed by 19 community members. The online survey is a good indication of the community's thoughts on the master plan recommendations.

1. How do you feel about the draft concept plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve?



2. Do you use the existing footy and soccer goals? From 18 answers, 14 participants (78%) indicated that they don't use the existing goals, and the rest of them indicated that they use them on casual basis.



3. How do you feel about the following recommendations?

Participants that engaged digitally were asked to share their level of support for each of the 14 master plan recommendations. Interested community members were invited to use stickers to indicate their preference for each element. All recommendation were well received with many receiving the support of all participants.

The following charts illustrate the summarised result of the community's support of each masterplan recommendations.



**100% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of upgrading the toilet block



**100% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of lighting along the path from the bus stop to the reserve and the car park



**100% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the proposal for upgrading entry nodes with wayfinding signage



**95% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of improving the visibility of the reserve by removing low and dense shrubs



**95% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the proposal for the new path through the reserve



**95% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of realigning the circuit path for walking and jogging



**95% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the proposal for the designed area next to the shops with seating and shade



**89% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of having the central lawn as a flexible open space



**89% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of expanding the picnic area with an additional shelter and a picnic table



**89% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of expanding the playground to suit varying ages



**89%** of the community members liked a lot or liked the proposal for the new multi-purpose court



**84% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of upgrading the car park



**84% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the proposal for a new senior exercise park

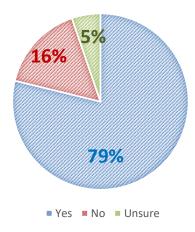


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**84% of the community members** liked a lot or liked the idea of removing the bocce court

4. Would you support a dog off leash area in the reserve in the future?

Participants were asked if they would support the introduction of an off-leash dog park in the reserve in the future, From 19 answers, 15 participants indicated they would.



5. Is there anything we have missed in the concept design?

Participants were asked to identify anything the master plan may have missed. Fifteen community members responded to the question and shared ideas of other improvements that could be considered.

These ideas included the inclusion of a dog drinking fountain and additional bins in the area. Numerous participants also took the opportunity to further support the future introduction of a dog off-leash park in the reserve and possibly re-purposing the existing bocce court into a fenced dog off-leash area. Others provided examples of other parks and what they liked and didn't like about them including the planting of indigenous plants and replacing the tanbark in the playground area with rubber soft-fall.

### **Gather Tool**

Sixteen participants opted to use the gather tool on the Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation project Engage page to share other comments related to the project. Comments were also captured through meetings with key stakeholders and community popups. The comments captured on Nick Ascenzo Reserve were:

- Introduction of amenities for children of all ages including teenagers (i.e. colourful playgrounds, rock-climbing and a skate park)
- Introduction of a formal running track

- An exercise park for different user groups and not just for seniors
- More bench seating near the community centre and near the residential area on the east side of the reserve
- More shaded areas
- Relocating the public toilet but keeping them still in close proximity to the community centre
- Additional lighting including motion sensor lighting and lighting on the community centre to highlight the artwork at night
- More visible signage including wayfinding and signage that indicates any activities that are not permitted in the reserve (i.e.motorcycles and dirt bikes)
- Concern around the placement of rubbish bins- positioning them closer to the picnic area and not in the reserve entrances to avoid dumping rubbish
- Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection

Below are some of the community comments:

#### Safety

"Love the idea and hope that it will bring more security to the area. There is currently a lot of graffiti happening there, drug affected people sleeping on the playground and I don't feel safe walking there myself due to the secluded section of the walking track inside the bushes."

"The two BIG issues with it are litter and antisocial behaviour. There is some sort of gathering that happens in the car park every Saturday night that results in the place being trashed afterward. Recently there's been signs of burnouts in the oval, destroyed fencing, and dumped hard rubbish. This needs to be addressed. I strongly recommend (a) more bins, especially in the car park, and (b) installing CCTV at the rec centre looking out over the car park and oval to aid in addressing the antisocial behaviour."

### Signage

"New signage should indicate that certain activities are not permitted in the Reserve. For example, from time to time we get loud motorbikes operating in the Reserve (on the large grass area), which is not a great use of the area."

### **Playspace**

"Activities for older kids i.e. colourful playgrounds, rockclimbing and a skate park"

"A water play area for children, underground trampolines etc (please no sand pits)"

### Dog off-leash Area

"Fenced-off area within the park for an off-leash dog area - For example, the Bocce court could be redesigned and expanded to be an off-lead dog area; or ensure the oval is fenced off. Due to the openness of the ground, it is not a good spot currently to have a dog off-leash."

### **Greenery & Shade**

"More shade trees to entice people to picnic there (my daughters childcare have taken excursions to this park and have lunch there, provisions like this would allow the broader community to use the area as well). I don't know what small shade trees are (as proposed) but some of the best parks we have include an abundance of large, medium and small trees offering shade and increasing appeal overall. Designing a landscape design that disguises the powerlines would be clever"

### Park Infrastructure

"More bin around the park because always a lot of rubbish around the park."

"I strongly recommend considering the placement of rubbish bins. In the design rubbish bins are at the exits to Nick Ascenzo Reserve, including at the north end of the reserve (Waratah Street boundary). Unfortunately, we have quite a bad issue in the area with people dumping rubbish. I have a fear that putting a obvious bin on the Waratah Street boundary will result in this issue worsening. Perhaps the bin could be located closer to the picnic area (which is its current location) where families can use it after eating in the park."

### **Community pop ups**

The in-person pop-ups had a similar quick poll for each of the main elements of the design. Interested community members were invited to add sticky dots in front of the design recommendations to indicate their top 4 priorities. The majority were in favour of the introduction of a senior exercise park and the expansion of the picnic area. The graph below shows the full rankings:

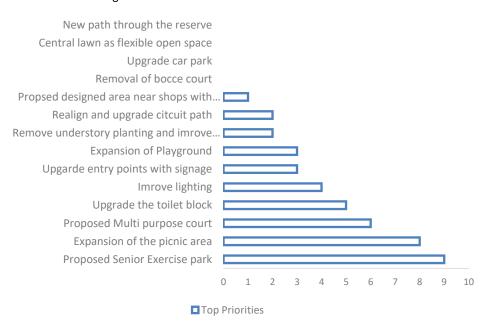


Image 02: ranking master plan recommendations at community pop ups





Image 03: project team engaging at the Alexander Avenue Shops and Nick Ascenzo Community Centre pop-ups.

The overall feedback received from the online survey and pop ups, reflected the following masterplan recommendations as the top nine (9) communities' priorities for improvement. As illustrated in the following diagram, some of the recommendations received the same level of support from the community.



### Key messages from the gather tool and pop-up sessions

The items that were most commonly raised through the gathering tool and during pop-up sessions have been summarised and categorised under the following themes.

### Access & Path

- Introduction of a formal running track
- Access from the car park to the Community Centre

# Safety

- Avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- Additional lighting

# Parking and Traffic Calming

 Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection

# Play space

- Introduction of amenities for children of all ages including teenagers (i.e. colourful playgrounds, rock-climbing wall and a skate park)
- Removal of tanbark in the playground and replacement with rubber soft-fall
- · A water play area

NICK ASCENZO RESERVE MASTER PLAN | OPEN SPACE PLANNING CITY OF WHITTLESEA | APPENDIX 2

# Park Infrastructure & Community facilities

- · Exercise park for different user groups and not just for seniors
- More bench seating near the community centre and the residential area on the east side of the reserve
- Relocating public toilet but keeping them still in close proximity of the community centre
- More bins around the park
- Positioning rubbish bins closer to the picnic area and not in the reserve entrances to avoid dumping rubbish
- More shaded areas
- Fence off the multi-purpose court

### Dog Park

• Fenced-off off-leash dog area

# Landscape & Greenery

- More shade trees
- Better maintenance and use of the central lawn

# Look & Feel / Signage & Lighting

- Additional lighting including motion sensor lighting
- Lighting on the community centre to highlight the artwork at night
- More visible signage including wayfinding and signage that indicated any activities that are not permitted in the reserve (i.e. motorcycles and dirt bikes)

# **Key Recommendations**

From the feedback received from the key stakeholders and the community, the following recommendations are made for inclusion in the Master Plan. Some of the received comments are out of the scope of the project or are not in line with the COW's strategies and policies, hence the associated recommendations are explained further by the 'Note' below them.

- ⇒ Investigate the traffic calming initiatives at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection near the north-east reserve entry
  Note: Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection is out of the scope of the project and needs further investigation by the Traffic Team. The outcome of the traffic analysis will inform the master plan.
- ⇒ Create a new path from the car park to the Community Centre
- ⇒ Line mark the proposed circuit path with distance markers to allow for formal running
- ⇒ Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins and seating, and review waste bins locations around the park
- ⇒ Provide softscape interventions e.g. more planting (low native planting) along Waratah Street to avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- ⇒ Incorporate rock climbing elements as part of the playground expansion
- ⇒ Investigate the development of a new path next to the playground which allows skating, skateboarding, scooter and BMX.
  Note: A skate park is identified as an appropriate facility for larger parks such as state and regional parks.
- ⇒ Change the playground surface material as part of the playground renewal program
- ⇒ Investigate the development of a water play area in other larger parks in Thomastown or neighbouring suburbs
  - <u>Note:</u> As per the open space strategy, the water feature is identified as an appropriate facility for the municipal parks, however Nick Ascenzo Reserve's limitation due to the powerline and associated facilities requirement for the water park, do not allow including a structured water play area in the reserve.
- ⇒ Expand the allocated area to include exercise equipment for different user groups
- $\Rightarrow$  Investigate potential for upgrades to the existing toilet block including relocation as part of the Community Centre's future upgrade
- ⇒ Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing an open unstructured dog off-leash area with the review of the 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan' and 'Open Space

Plan'

Note: Nick Ascenzo reserve has not been identified as a dog park in the adopted 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management plan'. It is being investigated to include the dog off-leash area in VR Michael Reserve in Lalor as part of the master plan development for this reserve. VR Michael Reserve is in 2km distance from Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the multi-purpose court due to nearby streets
- ⇒ Incorporate reserve lighting in warm colours at the reserve entrances, and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways
- $\Rightarrow$  Improve entry node with way-finding signage, different planting styles and/or types of materials used
- ⇒ Improve maintenance of the central lawn

## **Next steps**

Thank you to all community members who provided feedback and have engaged with the project team.

The project team will review the feedback received and develop a revised master plan with amendments that where possible address the concerns raised by the community.

The draft Nick Ascenzo reserve Master Plan will be presented to the Council for endorsement in the second half of 2023. Once endorsed the final plans will be shared with the community, providing any rationale for refinements made following community consultation. This will be shared through digital communications, direct contact with stakeholders, and updates through the Council's Engage platform.

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**131** 450





# Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan

**Phase 2 Participation and Engagement Findings Report** 

Prepared by Sepideh Movahed
Open Space Planning
July 2023, Version 1



### Introduction

Nick Ascenzo Reserve is one of City of Whittlesea's open space reserves in Thomastown, an established area of the municipality. Nick Ascenzo Reserve is identified as part of the Alexander Avenue Shopping Precinct Improvement Project, which will transform the precinct including, revitalisation of the town centre, neighbourhood open space and includes improvements to traffic management in the precinct. Phase 1 the Alexander Avenue Town Centre Revitalisation program was a 2020/21 Council Action Plan, that aims to improve the functionality, attractiveness, and vibrancy of local and neighbourhood town centres across the City of Whittlesea. Phase Two of precinct revitalisation is the Nick Ascenzo Reserve master plan development.

Feedback from the community and stakeholders will inform the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan. The engagement includes two phases: a) Phase One, Information Gathering, b) Phase Two, Draft Master Plan Exhibition.

Consultation phase 1, received diverse representation from a range of targeted stakeholders including Traders on Alexander Avenue, Thomastown East Primary School staff and parents, Community Activity Centre Users, Scouts, Visitors to the Shops and the community.

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council in identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and defining the key ideas for the reserve improvement.

The consultation was undertaken in August 2022, Nick Ascenzo Reserve feedback was captured as part of Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation engagement activities.

Consultation phase 2, was undertaken between the 19th of May 2023 to the 25th of June 2023 and involved engaging the broader community through pop-up sessions and on Council's digital engagement platform.

The purpose of this engagement was to receive community feedback on the Draft Alexander Avenue Streetscape and Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master plan to ensure that the future of the site reflects our community's needs. Council officers continued engagement with key stakeholders during phase two consultation.

The project engage page received 268 visitors with 33 community members providing feedback or completing the survey during the consultation period.



Increasing safety and accessibility in the area is a priority and the plans look to address these through better lighting, changes to the car parking, the upgrade and location of facilities including the play area and improving connection and visibility between the shopping precinct and reserve.

The draft master plan will guide the future development of the reserve and includes key recommendations that will create a safe and inclusive reserve to encourage people of all ages and abilities to access the park.

This report has been prepared by City of Whittlesea as part of the Nick Ascenzo Reserve Master Plan project. It summarises the broader community and stakeholders consultation outcomes.

## How we engaged you

# Phase 1: Community consultation to inform the draft master plan (COMPLETED August 2022)

The project team met with key stakeholders including the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group, shopkeepers and regular users of Nick Ascenzo Community Centre to gather thoughts and ideas on what should be included in the master plan. We also consulted with community members including those who frequently visit and use the shops and reserve.

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council in identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and defining key ideas for the park improvement.

Following this consultation, a master plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve was developed to guide the future development of the reserve to create a safe and inclusive area for the community to enjoy.

# Phase 2: Present draft master plan to community for further feedback (19 May- 25 June 2023)

The community consultation was promoted trough a range of tactics including:

- Direct mail to adjacent property owners Residents within 400m of the Alexander Avenue precinct were letterbox dropped to inform them of the draft concept plan and master plan and encourage them to attend a pop-up session or provide feedback through the projects Engage pages.
- Email to previously consulted Alexander Avenue Shop Precinct traders Traders who
  participated in first phase of the consultation were emailed to inform them of the
  Draft Future Direction Plan and encourage them to provide feedback. In-person
  discussions were undertaken with traders.
- Social media The opportunity to participate in the engagement was also promoted on Council's social media channels including Facebook and Instagram with the combined reach of 13,585 across the five posts.

2



The draft master plan was presented to the community for feedback between 19 May and 25 June 2023. Community feedback was sought online through Council's Engage Whittlesea platform and through direct conversation and activities at community-based pop-ups and key stakeholder meetings.

Council shared the key aspects of the master plan and asked the community whether they supported the draft master plan through a survey on the project Engage page that enabled participants to indicate their support of the plan using a rating scale from 'I like it a lot' to 'I don't like it at all' with five possible options. Participants also could identify any missed opportunities that could be added to the guidelines.

The project Engage pages offered the community the opportunity to view or download the draft master plan and featured FAQ sections for the projects.

The Nick Ascenzo design package included the draft master plan, high-level phase 1 consultation summary, high-level traffic study summary, and recommendations.

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an in-built translation tool to ensure that the information provided can be translated into the audience's preferred language to ensure it is understood.

Two Community pop-ups were held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June at the Nick Ascenzo Community Centre and the Alexander Avenue Street in front of shops.

Participants at community-based pop-ups were presented with the same key aspects of the draft master plan and offered the opportunity to undertake the same activity on large activity boards. This board posed the same question and possible responses as well as space to share any missed opportunities.

The project team met directly with key stakeholders including Alexander Avenue shopkeepers, the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School, the Alexander Avenue Enhancement Group and regular users of Nick Ascenzo Community Centre. Stakeholders were briefed on the project, shown the draft plan and offered the opportunity to provide further feedback on the draft.



Image 01: Dot board activities used by the project team at the communitybased pop-ups



# **Participation**

The Nick Ascrenzo Reserve Master Plan page on Council's engage platform received 268 visitors with 19 community members completing the survey during the consultation period.

Council Officers spoke with a further 14 people at the two pop-ups, and had separate workshops with Alexander Avenue Shop Precinct traders and the Principal of Thomastown East Primary School. A snapshot of consultation activities and community participation is below:



### What we heard

### **Survey Results**

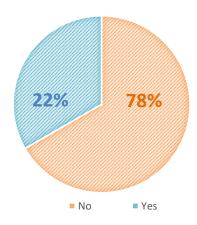
This section provides results from the online surveys completed by 19 community members. The online survey is a good indication of the community's thoughts on the master plan recommendations.

1. How do you feel about the draft concept plan for Nick Ascenzo Reserve?





2. Do you use the existing footy and soccer goals? From 18 answers, 14 participants (78%) indicated that they don't use the existing goals, and the rest of them indicated that they use them on casual basis.



3. How do you feel about the following recommendations?

Participants that engaged digitally were asked to share their level of support for each of the 14 master plan recommendations. Interested community members were invited to use stickers to indicate their preference for each element. All recommendation were well received with many receiving the support of all participants.

The following charts illustrate the summarised result of the community's support of each masterplan recommendations.

5



6

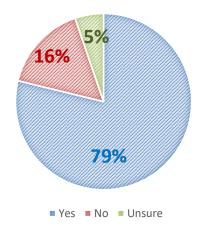
# A place for all





4. Would you support a dog off leash area in the reserve in the future?

Participants were asked if they would support the introduction of an off-leash dog park in the reserve in the future, From 19 answers, 15 participants indicated they would.



5. Is there anything we have missed in the concept design?

Participants were asked to identify anything the master plan may have missed. Fifteen community members responded to the question and shared ideas of other improvements that could be considered.

These ideas included the inclusion of a dog drinking fountain and additional bins in the area. Numerous participants also took the opportunity to further support the future introduction of a dog off-leash park in the reserve and possibly re-purposing the existing bocce court into a fenced dog off-leash area. Others provided examples of other parks and what they liked and didn't like about them including the planting of indigenous plants and replacing the tanbark in the playground area with rubber soft-fall.

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### **Gather Tool**

Sixteen participants opted to use the gather tool on the Alexander Avenue shopping precinct revitalisation project Engage page to share other comments related to the project. Comments were also captured through meetings with key stakeholders and community popups. The comments captured on Nick Ascenzo Reserve were:

- Introduction of amenities for children of all ages including teenagers (i.e. colourful playgrounds, rock-climbing and a skate park)
- Introduction of a formal running track
- An exercise park for different user groups and not just for seniors
- More bench seating near the community centre and near the residential area on the east side of the reserve
- More shaded areas
- Relocating the public toilet but keeping them still in close proximity to the community centre
- Additional lighting including motion sensor lighting and lighting on the community centre to highlight the artwork at night
- More visible signage including wayfinding and signage that indicates any activities that are not permitted in the reserve (i.e.motorcycles and dirt bikes)
- Concern around the placement of rubbish bins- positioning them closer to the picnic area and not in the reserve entrances to avoid dumping rubbish
- Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection

Below are some of the community comments:



#### Safety

"Love the idea and hope that it will bring more security to the area. There is currently a lot of graffiti happening there, drug affected people sleeping on the playground and I don't feel safe walking there myself due to the secluded section of the walking track inside the bushes."

"The two BIG issues with it are litter and antisocial behaviour. There is some sort of gathering that happens in the car park every Saturday night that results in the place being trashed afterward. Recently there's been signs of burnouts in the oval, destroyed fencing, and dumped hard rubbish. This needs to be addressed. I strongly recommend (a) more bins, especially in the car park, and (b) installing CCTV at the rec centre looking out over the car park and oval to aid in addressing the antisocial behaviour."

### Signage

"New signage should indicate that certain activities are not permitted in the Reserve. For example, from time to time we get loud motorbikes operating in the Reserve (on the large grass area), which is not a great use of the area."

### **Playspace**

"Activities for older kids i.e. colourful playgrounds, rockclimbing and a skate park"

"A water play area for children, underground trampolines etc (please no sand pits)"

### Dog off-leash Area

"Fenced-off area within the park for an off-leash dog area - For example, the Bocce court could be redesigned and expanded to be an off-lead dog area; or ensure the oval is fenced off. Due to the openness of the ground, it is not a good spot currently to have a dog off-leash."

### **Greenery & Shade**

"More shade trees to entice people to picnic there (my daughters childcare have taken excursions to this park and have lunch there, provisions like this would allow the broader community to use the area as well). I don't know what small shade trees are (as proposed) but some of the best parks we have include an abundance of large, medium and small trees offering shade and increasing appeal overall. Designing a landscape design that disguises the powerlines would be clever"

### **Park Infrastructure**

"More bin around the park because always a lot of rubbish around the park."

"I strongly recommend considering the placement of rubbish bins. In the design rubbish bins are at the exits to Nick Ascenzo Reserve, including at the north end of the reserve (Waratah Street boundary). Unfortunately, we have quite a bad issue in the area with people dumping rubbish. I have a fear that putting a obvious bin on the Waratah Street boundary will result in this issue worsening. Perhaps the bin could be located closer to the picnic area (which is its current location) where families can use it after eating in the park."

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# A place for all



### **Community pop ups**

The in-person pop-ups had a similar quick poll for each of the main elements of the design. Interested community members were invited to add sticky dots in front of the design recommendations to indicate their top 4 priorities. The majority were in favour of the introduction of a senior exercise park and the expansion of the picnic area. The graph below shows the full rankings:

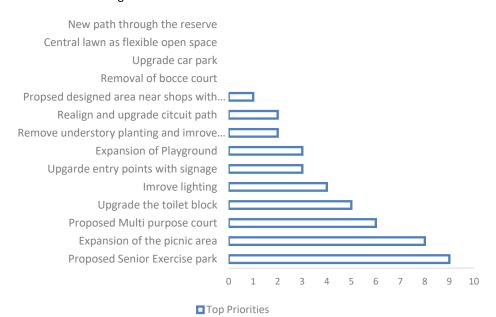


Image 02: ranking master plan recommendations at community pop ups





Image 03: project team engaging at the Alexander Avenue Shops and Nick Ascenzo Community Centre pop-ups.

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The overall feedback received from the online survey and pop ups, reflected the following masterplan recommendations as the top nine (9) communities' priorities for improvement. As illustrated in the following diagram, some of the recommendations received the same level of support from the community.



### Key messages from the gather tool and pop-up sessions

The items that were most commonly raised through the gathering tool and during pop-up sessions have been summarised and categorised under the following themes.

### **Access & Path**

- Introduction of a formal running track
- Access from the car park to the Community Centre

### Safety

- · Avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- Additional lighting

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# A place for all



# Parking and Traffic Calming

 Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection

## Play space

- Introduction of amenities for children of all ages including teenagers (i.e. colourful playgrounds, rock-climbing wall and a skate park)
- Removal of tanbark in the playground and replacement with rubber soft-fall
- A water play area

# Park Infrastructure & Community facilities

- Exercise park for different user groups and not just for seniors
- More bench seating near the community centre and the residential area on the east side of the reserve
- Relocating public toilet but keeping them still in close proximity of the community centre
- More bins around the park
- Positioning rubbish bins closer to the picnic area and not in the reserve entrances to avoid dumping rubbish
- More shaded areas
- Fence off the multi-purpose court

# Dog Park

• Fenced-off off-leash dog area

# Landscape & Greenery

- More shade trees
- Better maintenance and use of the central lawn

# Look & Feel / Signage & Lighting

- Additional lighting including motion sensor lighting
- Lighting on the community centre to highlight the artwork at night
- More visible signage including wayfinding and signage that indicated any activities that are not permitted in the reserve (i.e. motorcycles and dirt bikes)



# **Key Recommendations**

From the feedback received from the key stakeholders and the community, the following recommendations are made for inclusion in the Master Plan. Some of the received comments are out of the scope of the project or are not in line with the COW's strategies and policies, hence the associated recommendations are explained further by the 'Note' below them.

- ⇒ Investigate the traffic calming initiatives at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection near the north-east reserve entry <a href="Note:">Note:</a> Installing a speed hump or raised intersection at the Waratah Street and Myrtle Street intersection is out of the scope of the project and needs further investigation by the Traffic Team. The outcome of the traffic analysis will inform the master plan.
- $\Rightarrow$  Create a new path from the car park to the Community Centre
- ⇒ Line mark the proposed circuit path with distance markers to allow for formal running
- ⇒ Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins and seating, and review waste bins locations around the park
- ⇒ Provide softscape interventions e.g. more planting (low native planting) along Waratah Street to avoid vehicles from entering the reserve
- ⇒ Incorporate rock climbing elements as part of the playground expansion
- ⇒ Investigate the development of a new path next to the playground which allows skating, skateboarding, scooter and BMX.
  Note: A skate park is identified as an appropriate facility for larger parks such as state and regional parks.
- $\Rightarrow$  Change the playground surface material as part of the playground renewal program
- ⇒ Investigate the development of a water play area in other larger parks in Thomastown or neighbouring suburbs
  - <u>Note:</u> As per the open space strategy, the water feature is identified as an appropriate facility for the municipal parks, however Nick Ascenzo Reserve's limitation due to the powerline and associated facilities requirement for the water park, do not allow including a structured water play area in the reserve.
- ⇒ Expand the allocated area to include exercise equipment for different user groups
- ⇒ Investigate potential for upgrades to the existing toilet block including relocation as part of the Community Centre's future upgrade

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- ⇒ Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing an open unstructured dog off-leash area with the review of the 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan' and 'Open Space Plan'

Note: Nick Ascenzo reserve has not been identified as a dog park in the adopted 'Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management plan'. It is being investigated to include the dog off-leash area in VR Michael Reserve in Lalor as part of the master plan development for this reserve. VR Michael Reserve is in 2km distance from Nick Ascenzo Reserve.

- ⇒ Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the multi-purpose court due to nearby streets
- ⇒ Incorporate reserve lighting in warm colours at the reserve entrances, and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways
- $\Rightarrow$  Improve entry node with way-finding signage, different planting styles and/or types of materials used
- $\Rightarrow$  Improve maintenance of the central lawn

# **Next steps**

Thank you to all community members who provided feedback and have engaged with the project team.

The project team will review the feedback received and develop a revised master plan with amendments that where possible address the concerns raised by the community.

The draft Nick Ascenzo reserve Master Plan will be presented to the Council for endorsement in the second half of 2023. Once endorsed the final plans will be shared with the community, providing any rationale for refinements made following community consultation. This will be shared through digital communications, direct contact with stakeholders, and updates through the Council's Engage platform.



### 5.6 Council Meetings Schedule for 2024

**Director/Executive Manager:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Report Author:** Coordinator Governance Administration

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is for Council to adopt the proposed Council Meeting schedule for the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Council Meetings are conducted monthly so that Council can make formal decisions and to give the community an opportunity to participate in this decision-making process.

In accordance with the Governance Rules, Council must adopt the proposed schedule for the following year and advise the community of the meeting schedule.

It is proposed that Council Meetings are conducted on the third Tuesday of the month commencing each year in February. It is also proposed due to Council Elections in October 2024, and caretaker requirements, Council meetings will not be scheduled for September and October 2024.

### Officers' Recommendation

### **THAT Council:**

1. Adopt the Council meeting schedule for 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2025 as follows:

2024	2025
Tuesday 20 February 2024	Tuesday 18 February 2025
Tuesday 19 March 2024	Tuesday 19 March 2025
Tuesday 16 April 2024	Tuesday 15 April 2025
Tuesday 21 May 2024	Tuesday 20 May 2025
Tuesday 18 June 2024	Tuesday 17 June 2025
Tuesday 16 July 2024	
Tuesday 20 August 2024	
Tuesday 26 November 2024	
Tuesday 17 December 2024	



- 2. Resolve that all Council meetings will commence at 6:30pm and be held at the Civic Centre, Ferres Boulevard South Morang.
- 3. Note officers will give public notice of the Council meeting schedule for 2024 and first six months of 2025.



## **Background / Key Information**

Council Meetings are conducted throughout the year so that Council can make formal decisions and to give the community an opportunity to participate in this decision-making process on issues that affect the community. Council Meetings also provide the community with the ability to participate in Council Meetings through Public Question Time.

At the City of Whittlesea, Council Meetings are conducted monthly in accordance with the Governance Rules. It is proposed that Council Meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of the month commencing in February.

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

## **High Performing Organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and Council's Governance Rules, Council is required to set the date, time and place of Scheduled Council Meetings and that reasonable notice be provided to the public. In accordance with Council's Public Transparency Policy 2023, Scheduled Council Meetings promote openness and transparency in Council decision-making processes and raise public awareness of the availability of Council information.

#### Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

## **Financial Management**

The cost is included in the current budget.

### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

Not applicable.

## Other Principles for Consideration as per the Local Government Act (2020)

#### **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

## **Public Transparency Principles**

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.



## **Council Policy Considerations**

## **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

No Implications

#### Social, Cultural and Health

No Implications

#### **Economic**

No Implications

## **Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications**

No Implications

## **Implementation Strategy**

#### Communication

Council will provide public notice of Council's meeting schedule on Council's website and the schedule will be promoted through Council's social media and Local Scoop Magazine. Members of the community will be encouraged to attend Council meetings in person or watch by live-stream or recording at their convenience.

#### **Critical Dates**

The Council meeting schedule for is required to be adopted to enable meeting dates for 2024 to be publicly advertised.

## **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

# **Attachments**

Attachments: Nil



# **5.7 Councillor Gift Policy**

**Director/Executive Manager:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Report Author:** Coordinator Governance Administration

## **Executive Summary**

Section 138 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Act) requires Council to adopt a Councillor Gift Policy that includes procedures for the maintenance of a gift register and any matters prescribed by the regulations. Section 138(3) of the Act allows for Council to review and update the Councillor Gift Policy (Policy).

In preparation for the return of an elected Council, the attached Policy replaces the previously adopted Administrator Gifts and Benefits Policy 2021.

# Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council adopt the Councillor Gift Policy attached at Attachment 1.



## **Background / Key Information**

The amended Councillor Gift Policy has taken into consideration discussions held on 26 September 2023.

The Policy has been reviewed to align with:

- The wording of section 138 of the Act; namely 'Councillor Gift Policy'.
- The GIFT test (as developed by the Victorian Public Sector Commission) for Councillors to consider when accepting or declining a gift.
- The HOST test (as developed by the Victorian Public Sector Commission) for Councillors to consider when putting on functions, events or providing gifts to external stakeholder to ensure community trust.
- The value of the Australian dollar and what gift or hospitality you could get for \$20 that would not reasonably be perceived to influence or raise a conflict of interest as it applies to decision making.
- Transparency to the public on the amount Council spends on a gift at the end of a
  Mayoral term (\$150) and Deputy Mayor term (\$50). These nominal amounts are in
  addition to a personalised memento album presented to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at
  the conclusion of their term. Similarly, for transparency the amount Council
  administration may pay for a gift for Councillors at the end of their four-year Council
  term (\$100 per Councillor).

Other administrative amendments were made within the Policy to ensure consistency and clarity.

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

## **High Performing Organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

## Considerations of Local Government Act (2020) Principles

## **Financial Management**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

#### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

The Act does not require community consultation when amending the Policy.



# Other Principles for Consideration as per the Local Government Act (2020)

## **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

#### **Public Transparency Principles**

(e) NA

# **Council Policy Considerations**

## **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

No Implications

## Social, Cultural and Health

No Implications

#### **Economic**

No Implications

## Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

There are legislative risks associated with Councillors not declaring gifts, benefits or hospitality, and gifts not recorded on the gift register and made publicly available in accordance with the Act.

#### **Implementation Strategy**

#### Communication

If adopted, the Policy will be placed on Council's website and CoWHUB (Intranet).

#### **Critical Dates**

There are currently no critical dates associated with the adoption of this policy.

## **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

#### **Attachments**

## **Attachments:**

1. Draft Councillor Gift Policy [5.7.1 - 10 pages]





# **COUNCILLOR GIFT POLICY**

#### **Policy statement**

Council considers that the proper management of Councillor Gifts is a practical demonstration of Councillors integrity, impartiality and accountability and contributes to community confidence in the Council's decision making.

Whittlesea City Council recognises that Councillors will on occasions be offered gifts, benefits and hospitality however, Councillors in performing their roles ensure good governance and not to derive undue personal benefit.

Receipt of a gift from a person or organisation can result in a conflict of interest, or a perceived conflict of interest, in a matter. Councillors need to familiarise themselves with the conflict of interest provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and take personal responsibility for their own compliance.

The offer of a gift to a Councillor may also affect perceptions of bias. This Policy confirms that gifts that are declined should also be recorded in the Gifts Register.

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Councillor Gift Policy will:
  - 1.1.1 provide a transparent and consistent framework regarding offers of Gifts made to and by Councillors.
  - 1.1.2 minimise Gift offers made to and accepted by Councillors, in order to protect and promote public confidence in the integrity of the Council.

#### 2. Scope

2.1 This Policy applies to all Councillors.

Date of Adoption Next Review Date Directorate Responsible





## Alignment to Whittlesea 2040

The Councillor Gift Policy primarily guides Council's work toward the following Goal as outlined in Whittlesea 2040: A place for all: **High Performing Organisation** 

#### **Overarching Governance Principles**

The development of this Policy considered the *Local Government Act 2020's* Overarching Governance Principles and the following were applied:

Lawful	$\boxtimes$	Community engagement		Financially viable	
Best community outcome		Innovation & improvement		Consistent with government plans	$\boxtimes$
Sustainable		Collaboration with government bodies		Transparent	$\boxtimes$

Councillors will uphold the following principles in applying this policy:

- Accountability: Councillors ensure they and their fellow Councillors are accountable in accordance with this policy.
- Impartiality: Councillors have a duty to place public interest above their private interests when carrying out their official duties as a Councillor.
- Integrity: Council strives to earn and sustain public trust through responding to offers of Gifts in a manner that is consistent with community expectations.
- Risk-based approach: Councillors must ensure they consider the reputational and legal risks inherent with Gifts when dealing with offers.

**Gender Equality, Climate Change, Human Rights and Child Safe Compliance**All City of Whittlesea policies comply with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, Gender Equality Act, Climate Change Act* and the *Child Safe Standards*.

Date of Adoption Next Review Date Directorate Responsible





#### **3. Definitions**3.1 In this policy:

Act means the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic).

Administration means the Chief Executive Officer or Council Officers.

**Benefit** includes preferential treatment, privileged access, favours or other advantages offered to Councillors (ie. an invitation to sporting, cultural or social events, access to discounts or loyalty programs, personal services) either during or promised after their elected term.

**Bribe** means an offer of money or other inducement made with the intention to corruptly influence a Councillor in the performance of their duties.

**Councillor** means a person who holds the office of member of the Council, including Administrators.

Mayor means Mayor of Council.

Councillor Gift Register means the record of Non-Token Gifts whether accepted or declined.

#### Gift means:

- free or discounted items or services and any item or service that may be perceived by the public as a gift. Including without limitation to high and low value items, consumables and services;
- benefits including preferential treatment, privileged access, upgrades, favours or other advantages offered to a Councillor, including, without limitation, invitations to sporting, cultural or social events, access to discounted or loyalty programs or the promise of a new job; and
- any kind of hospitality.

**Gift Disclosure threshold** means the value which equals or exceeds \$500, including gifts in the form of goods or services and multiple gifts that together equal or exceed that amount, which was received at any time since the specified person lodged the preceding initial or biannual personal interests return. This requirement does not apply in respect of:

- gifts received by a specified person from a family member;
- gifts disclosed in an election campaign donation return;
- any reasonable hospitality received by the specified person at an event or function that the person attended in an official capacity as a Councillor.

**Reasonable hospitality test** means the hospitality must be of a standard and type that an independent observer would consider appropriate and not excessive. For example unreasonable hospitality could include a 'fine dining' work lunch or dinner, an offer of a free spot at an industry golf day or ticket to AFL grand final or similar event:

**Official capacity test** means it must clearly be your duty as a Councillor to attend the relevant event or function.

Date of Adoption Next Review Date Directorate Responsible





Non-Token Gift means a gift offered to a Councillor that is, or may be perceived to be, of more than inconsequential value by the recipient or by the wider community. All offers estimated to be worth more than \$20 (either individually or aggregated over the preceding 12-month period) are Non-Token offers and must be refused and recorded on the Councillor Gift Register (whether accepted or declined).

**Token Gift** means a Gift offered to a Councillor that is of inconsequential or trivial value. The primary determinant of a Token Gift is that it would not be reasonably perceived to influence or raise a conflict of interest. A Gift with an estimated value of equal to or less than \$20 is a Token Gift (unless the same offeror has made several Token Gift offers in the preceding 12-month period, which when aggregated exceed \$20).





#### 4. Gift Assessment

- 4.1 Councillors must not seek, solicit, demand or request Gifts for themselves or anyone else, in any form.
- 4.2 When deciding whether to accept an offer of a Gift, Councillors should first consider if the offer could be perceived as influencing them in performing their duties or lead to reputational damage. The more valuable the offer, the more likely that a conflict of interest or reputational risk exists.
- 4.3 Councillors must consider the GIFT test<sup>1</sup> outlined in Figure 1 below when offered a Gift.

Figure 1. GIFT test

G	Giver	Who is providing the gift, benefit or hospitality and what is their relationship to me?  Does my role require me to select contractors, award grants, regulate industries or determine government policies?  Could the person or organisation benefit from a decision I make?	
ı	Influence	Are they seeking to influence my decisions or actions?  Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered to me publicly or privately?  Is it a courtesy, a token of appreciation or highly valuable?  Does its timing coincide with a decision I am about to make?	
F	Favour	Are they seeking a favour in return for the gift, benefit or hospitality?  Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered honestly? Has the person or organisation made several offers of the last 12 months?  Would accepting it create an obligation to return a favour?	
Т	Trust	Would accepting the gift, benefit or hospitality diminish public trust?  How would I feel if the gift, benefit or hospitality became public knowledge?  What would my colleagues, family friends or associates think?	

- 4.4 Councillors are encouraged to seek advice from the Office of Council & CEO if they have doubts about accepting a Gift, Benefit or Hospitality, regardless of the value.
- 4.5 Councillors must refuse all offers of Gifts which are, or perceived to:
  - 4.5.1 influence them in the course of their duties.
  - 4.5.2 raise a material or general conflict of interest for the Councillor either immediately or in the future.

Date of Adoption Next Review Date Directorate Responsible

21 November 2023 November 2027 Office of Council & CEO

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The GIFT test as developed by the State of Victoria (Victorian Public Sector Commission) 2016.





- 4.5.3 of money, vouchers, credit or similar.
- 4.5.4 made in secret with an express or implied expectation that the Councillor will not publicly disclose the Gift.

#### 5. Token Gift Offers

5.1 Councillors may accept Token Gift offers without declaring the offer on the Councillor Gift Register, unless the offer must be refused as outlined above. A Token Gift cannot be worth more than \$20.

#### 6. Non-Token Gift Offers

- 6.1 Councillors must, in the fist instance, politely decline any Non-Token Gift offers.
- 6.2 All Non-Token Gift offers must be recorded in the Councillor Gift Register.
- 6.3 It is a Councillor's responsibility to notify and provide adequate information to the Office of Council & CEO to enable registration of a Non-Token Gift offer on the Councillor Gift Register.
- 6.4 Councillors may be offered a Non-Token Gift where there is no opportunity to decline prior to accepting. For example, they may receive a parcel in the post which contains a Gift. At first instance, the Councillor should return the gift to the sender. If that is not possible due to it being an anonymous Gift, the Councillor must refer the Gift to the CEO determine the most appropriate distribution or disposal within 30 days of the Gift being received.
- 6.5 A Councillor must declare any Non-Token Gift or hospitality extended to or transferred to a member of their immediate family.

## 7. Anonymous Gifts

7.1 Section 137 of the Act outlines when an anonymous gift must not to be accepted.

#### 8. Attendance at Events and Functions

- 8.1 This policy does not apply to invitations to, and reasonable hospitality provided at events and functions that a Councillor is required to attend in an official capacity, including where:
  - 8.1.1 the Councillor is invited to open or speak at the event or function or is otherwise involved in the proceedings.
  - 8.1.2 the Councillor is a Council appointed representative of a committee or group involved in or relevant to the event or function.
  - 8.1.3 a majority of Councillors or the Mayor consider that it is appropriate and aligned with community expectations for the Councillor to attend the event or function.
- 8.2 Invitations to attend events and functions in an official capacity are not considered Gifts under this policy and are not required to be declared on the Councillors Gifts Register.
- 8.3 If a Councillor is invited to attend a function or event and is not required to do so in an official capacity i.e. to open or speak at the event or function, the invitation to attend must be treated as a Token Gift offer or Non-Token Gift offer in accordance with this policy, noting that the

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Councillor is not required to declare a Non-Token Gift offer of this kind on the Councillor Gift Register.

8.4 Councillors should seek advice from the Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO if they are unsure if their attendance at an event is or would be in an official capacity. However, it is ultimately for the Councillor to determine.

## 9. Councillor Gift Register

- 9.1 Access to amend the Councillor Gift Register is restricted to relevant persons within the Council.
- 9.2 Council's Audit and Risk Committee will receive a report at least annually on the Councillor Gift Register.
- 9.3 The Councillor Gift Register is maintained by the Office of Council & CEO and will be updated quarterly.
- 9.4 The Councillor Gift Register will be made available to the public, including publication on Council's website.
- 9.5 The Councillor Gift Register will include any information the Office of Council & CEO consider from time to time is legal and relevant to disclose including the recipient's name, date the Gift was offered, a description of the Gift, the reason the Gift is being offered, accepted or declined, the estimate value of the Gift and the name of the organisation or individual offering the Gift.

#### 10. Ceremonial Gifts

- 10.1 Ceremonial Gifts are the property of Council, irrespective of value, and should be accepted by Councillors on behalf of Council.
- 10.2 Councillors accepting a Ceremonial Gift on behalf of Council:
  - 10.2.1 must arrange registration of the Gift on the Councillor Gift Register.
  - 10.2.2 discuss with the Office of Council & CEO and other Councillors an appropriate means of displaying, disposing of or storing the Gift.

Note: In the event a consensus is not reached in discussions, the Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO in consultation with the CEO will determine whether and how to display, dispose of or store the Gift.

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#### 11. Providing Gifts

11.1 Councillors must consider the HOST test<sup>2</sup> outline in Figure 2 below when providing Gifts.

Figure 2. HOST test

Н	Hospitality	To whom is the gift or hospitality being provided? Will recipients be external business associates, or individuals of the host organisation?
0	Objectives	For what purpose will hospitality be provided?  Is the hospitality being provided to further the conduct of official business? Will it promote and support government policy objectives and priorities? Will it contribute to staff wellbeing and workplace satisfaction?
S	Spend	Will public funds be spent?  What type of hospitality will be provided? Will it be modest or expensive, and will alcohol be provided as a courtesy or an indulgence? Will the costs incurred be proportionate to the benefits obtained?
Т	Trust	Will public trust be enhanced or diminished?  Could you publicly explain the rationale for providing the gift or hospitality? Will the event be conducted in a manner which upholds the reputation of the public sector? Have records in relation to the gift or hospitality been kept in accordance with reporting and recording procedures?

#### 12. Considerations when providing Gifts

- 12.1 Councillors providing Gifts must ensure that:
  - 12.1.1 any Gift, Benefit or Hospitality is provided for a business purpose in that it furthers the conduct of official business or other legitimate Council goals or promotes and supports the Council's policy objectives and priorities'.
  - 12.1.2 it does not raise an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest.
  - 12.1.3 any costs are proportionate to the benefits obtained for Council and would be considered reasonable in terms of community expectations.
  - 12.1.4 costs are contained wherever possible, and expenditure complies with principles of financial probity and efficient use of resources.

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21 November 2023 November 2027 Office of Council & CEO

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The HOST test as developed by the State of Victoria (Victorian Public Sector Commission) 2016.





#### 13. Personal Celebrations

13.1 Gifts provided to Councillors for personal celebrations will not be funded by Council. This includes anniversaries or birthdays of a Councillors. Nothing in this policy will prohibit Councillors or Council staff from personally paying for a Gift for such occasions.

#### 14. Mayoral and Councillor Gifts

- 14.1 At the end of each Mayoral term Council provides gifts chosen by the administration, not to exceed to the following nominal amounts. The nominal amounts are in addition to a personalised memento album presented to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at the conclusion of their term:
  - 14.1.1 \$150 to the Mayor.
  - 14.1.2 \$50 to the Deputy Mayor.
- 14.2 These gifts are a memento in recognition of the importance of these roles for Whittlesea City Council.
- 14.3 In addition to clause 14.1, at the end of the four-year Council term, Council, at its discretion, may provide a gift to all Councillors which will not exceed the following nominal amount:
  - 14.3.1 \$100 per Councillor.
  - 14.3.2 These gifts:
    - (a) must be registered by Council on the Gift Register.
    - (b) are otherwise exempt from this Policy (as in the individual may accept the gift).
- 14.4 The choice of gift remains the sole discretion of the administration.
- 14.5 Gifts that are donations on behalf of the gift recipient (or in the name of Council) must only be to a registered charity.

#### 15. Guidelines

- 15.1 Disclosure Requirement:
  - 15.1.1 Councillors must declare all offers of gifts or benefits, and all hospitality where the value is \$20 or more including those offers that have been declined, using the Gift Declaration Form.
  - 15.1.2 Councillors, upon receipt or refusal of a gift, benefit or hospitality must complete the Gift Declaration Form Councillors (Appendix A), sign it, have it endorsed by the CEO and submit to Office of Council & CEO via email <a href="mailto:civic.administration@whittlesea.vic.gov.au">civic.administration@whittlesea.vic.gov.au</a> within 7 days for inclusion in the Register.

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- 15.1.3 Councillors must disclose in their biannual Personal Interest Returns the details of any gift valued at \$500 or more (or the threshold fixed by the Secretary) including the gifts in the form of goods or services and multiple gifts that together equal or exceed \$500, received at any time since the lodgement of preceding initial or biannual personal interest returns, unless:
  - (a) it was reasonable hospitality received at an event or function attended in an official capacity,
  - (b) gift is from a family member.
  - (c) gifts disclosed in an election campaign donation return.
  - (d) any reasonable hospitality at an event or function attended in an official capacity as a Councillor.
- 15.1.4 A Councillor who has a conflict of interest because of receiving a gift or gifts must disclose the conflict of interest in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Governance Rules.
- 15.1.5 Nothing in this policy shall be construed to override the provisions of the Act. In the event of any apparent inconsistency, the provisions of the Act will prevail.

#### 16. Reporting Concerns

- 16.1 Councillors who consider that a gift, benefits or hospitality received has not been declared in accordance with the provisions of this Policy or it is not being appropriately managed, can report the matter to:
  - 16.1.1 Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO; or
  - 16.1.2 Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator; or
  - 16.1.3 CEO.

#### 17. External Reporting Options:

- Local Government Inspectorate, for detailed process and information https://www.lgi.vic.gov.au/make-complaint-local-government-inspectorate
- Independent broad-based anti-corruption Commission (IBAC), for detailed process and information <a href="https://www.ibac.giv.gov.au/reporting-coruption/report">https://www.ibac.giv.gov.au/reporting-coruption/report</a>

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# 5.8 Councillor Expense, Reimbursement and Support Policy

**Director/Executive Manager:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

Report Author: EA to Council

# **Executive Summary**

Section 41 of the *Local Government Act* requires Council to adopt and maintain a Policy in relation to reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors and members of delegated Committees.

# Officers' Recommendation

THAT Council endorse the Councillor Expense, Reimbursement and Support Policy at Attachment 1.



## **Background / Key Information**

The Councillor Expense, Reimbursement and Support Policy was previously adopted by the Council on 4 August 2020 and has now been rewritten and reviewed in preparation for the return of an elected Council in October 2024.

The Policy ensures reimbursement of expenses is in accordance with the *Local Government Act*, meets the Act's principles and public transparency, achieves the best outcomes for the municipality community and ensures the ongoing financial viability of the Council.

#### Some key information to note:

- A Smart Phone and an iPad or Laptop will be provided;
- Requirements for interstate and international travel;
- Approval process child or dependent care when on official Council business;
- A home office will not be provided;
- Process for claiming reimbursements;
- A Mayoral vehicle will not be provided; and
- Training and development budget of \$10,000 per financial year, per Councillor will be allocated noting training and development will not be approved in the final six (6) months of the Council term.

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

## **High Performing Organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

## Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

#### **Financial Management**

The cost associated with setting up Councillors for success will be included in 2024-2025 budget.

## **Community Consultation and Engagement**

The Act does not require community consultation when amending the Policy.



# Other Principles for Consideration as per the Local Government Act (2020)

## **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(i) The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

## **Public Transparency Principles**

(d) Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

## **Council Policy Considerations**

## **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

No Implications

## Social, Cultural and Health

No Implications

#### **Economic**

No Implications

## Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No Implications

# **Implementation Strategy**

#### Communication

The Policy will be placed on Council's website and CoWHUB (Intranet).

#### **Critical Dates**

There are no critical dates associated with the adoption of this Policy.

## **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.

#### **Attachments**

## **Attachments:**

1. Councillor Expense Reimbursement and Support Policy Draft [5.8.1 - 16 pages]





# COUNCILLOR EXPENSE, REIMBURSEMENT AND SUPPORT POLICY

#### 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 In accordance with section 41 of the Act, Council must adopt and maintain a policy in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors and members of delegated committees
- 1.2 Councillors and members of delegated committees are entitled, under section 40 of the Act to reimbursement of expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties.

#### Purpose

- 2.1 Councillors are elected to provide leadership for the good governance of the municipal district and the local community, as defined under the *Local Government Act 2020*, by ensuring that expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their role are reimbursed. The Policy also provides guidance on:
  - Entitlements and support
  - Processes for reimbursement
  - Reporting, monitoring, evaluation and review requirements
  - Other measures supporting Councillors to fulfil their duties

#### 3. Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to:
  - Councillors
  - Members of Delegated Committees

#### 4. Alignment to Whittlesea 2040

4.1 The Councillor Expense, Reimbursement and Support Policy primarily guides Council's work toward the following Goal as outlined in *Whittlesea 2040: A place for all: High Performing Organisation* 

## 5. Overarching Governance Principles

The development of this Policy considered the *Local Government Act 2020's* Overarching Governance Principles and the following were applied:

Lawful Community engagement Financially viable	
--	--

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Best community outcome	$\boxtimes$
Sustainable	$\boxtimes$

Innovation & improvement	$\boxtimes$
Collaboration with government bodies	$\boxtimes$

Consistent with government plans	
Transparent	$\boxtimes$

6. **DefinitionsAct**: means the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Carer: means a carer as defined under section 3 of the Carers Recognition Act 2012

**Chief Executive Officer (CEO):** means the person appointed by Council to be its Chief Executive Officer, or any person acting in that position

Council: means the City of Whittlesea being all the Councillors collectively

Councillor: means an elected representative of the community

**Delegated Committee**: means a delegated committee established by Council under section 63 of the Act

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment:** means any device including mobile phones, iPads, laptops and any peripheral or related devices or accessories

Mayor: means the Councillor elected to the Office of the Mayor

Municipality: means the City of Whittlesea municipality

OCCEO: means Office of Council and CEO

**Out-of-Pocket Expenses**: means expenses that has been met by the Councillor or delegated committee member, using their own funds, which may later be reimbursed.

**Travel Expenses**: means cost for travelling by car, taxi, public transport, or air in relation to Council business or business related to the delegated committee.

## 7. Policy Principles

- 7.1 The general principles underpinning this Policy are as follows:
  - councillors must meet the standards of conduct set out in the Councillor Code of Conduct prescribed under section 139 of the Act;
  - encouraging diversity in participation, equity, inclusion and access; and
  - accountability and transparency.

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- 7.2 This Policy ensures reimbursement of expenses is in accordance with the Act and meets the Act's principles of public transparency; achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community; and ensuring the ongoing financial viability of the Council.
- 7.3 Councillors and members of delegated committees will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that are:
  - bona fide expenses;
  - have been reasonably incurred in the performance of their role; and
  - are reasonably necessary to perform their role.
- 7.4 The Council administration is committed to ensuring that all claims are processed effectively and efficiently as possible.

#### 8. Legislative Framework

- 8.1 This Policy has been set out in accordance with sections 39-43 of the Act.
- 8.2 The following Acts, policies and documents have relevance to this policy:
  - Carer's Recognition Act 2012
  - Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
  - Children Youth and Families Act 2005
  - Freedom of Information Act 1982
  - Local Government Act 2020
  - Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
  - Equal Opportunity Act 2010
  - Gender Equity Act 2020
  - Councillor Code of Conduct
  - Public Transparency Policy
  - Audit and Risk Committee Charter
  - Council's Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Risk Management Framework
  - Governance Rules

#### 9. Allowance for Mayors and Councillors

9.1 Section 39 of the Act provides the framework for payment of annual allowances to Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors.

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- 9.2 The allowances framework provides a three-level structure for allowances based on Council population and total revenue and is determined in accordance with the Victorian Remuneration Tribunal under the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019.
  - In addition to the allowance, an amount equivalent to the superannuation guarantee contribution is payable into their superannuation fund.
- 9.3 Allowances are taxable income and paid fortnightly in advance. Personal taxation implications are the responsibility of individual Councillors.
- 9.4 Details of current allowances fixed for the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Whittlesea are available for public inspection on Council's website and at the Council Office, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.

#### 10. Resources and Facilities for the Mayor and Councillors

The following resources, facilities and support will be provided to Councillors to assist in performing their duties as a Councillor.

#### 10.1 Mobile Communications

- 10.1.1 All Councillors will be provided with, as deemed appropriate by the CEO, information technology, including an internet data plan. Councillors will also be issued with a mobile number and a City of Whittlesea email address. The following equipment will be provided:
  - Smart Phone
  - Laptop or iPad
  - A multifunction colour printer, scanning, copying and all associated consumables, toners, paper will be made available in the Councillor Room at Council
- 10.1.2 The make, model and style of the ICT devices provided will be determined by the CEO and Chief Information Officer based on current telecommunications plans and offers available to Council and in consultation with the Councillor. IT support will only be provided to the devices issued to Councillors by Council.
- 10.1.3 Councillors must return all Council issued equipment to the City of Whittlesea on the next business day at the conclusion of a Councillor's term, unless otherwise agreed by the Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO.
- 10.1.4 If any Council issued equipment needs to be replaced, for whatever reason, it shall be returned to the responsible Council Officer at the same time as the replacement equipment is issued.

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#### 10.2 Data

- 10.2.1 Council will meet the fixed charges of the Smart Phone and internet services. Council will also meet the call or data costs for these services incurred for duties as a Councillor.
- 10.2.2 Usage of all ICT devices will be restricted to the Councillor to whom they have been assigned and the assigned Councillor shall be responsible for all usage incurred on the devices.
- 10.2.3 Councillors will take care to safeguard any personal or Council information stored on devices so as it cannot be accessed by other persons. All devices must be kept in secure location when not in use.
- 10.2.4 Councillors may use Council provided devices for incidental private use. Incidental private use is defined as use that incurs costs of no more than 10% of the total monthly call and data costs.
- 10.2.5 Council will not provide or contribute to the costs of existing internet services or plans of a Councillor beyond what is set out in this Policy, unless mutually agreed with the CEO.
- 10.2.6 Any excessive costs as assessed by the CEO, incurred by a Councillor whilst travelling overseas, must be reimbursed to Council by the relevant Councillor within 14 days.
- 10.2.7 Council is not responsible for loss of personal/private data stored on Council devices.

#### 10.3 Support (Help Desk and Training)

- 10.3.1 Support for Councillors to set up their Council issued ICT equipment and day to day trouble shooting assistance is provided by Council's Information and Communications Service Desk Officers.
- 10.3.2 For the initial three (3) month period upon being elected, requests for ICT assistance shall be made directly to the OCCEO and thereafter directly to Council's Helpdesk on 9217 2170 or via email to <a href="https://helpdesk@whittlesea.vic.gov.au">helpdesk@whittlesea.vic.gov.au</a>.
- 10.3.3 In addition to training provided through induction, further training in the use of ICT resources issued to Councillors may be arranged on an as required basis at the Councillor request.

#### 11.1 Travel

- 11.1.2 Mayor and Councillors may book Council fleet vehicles for use when performing official Council duties. The provision of the vehicle is subject to the following terms and conditions:
  - (a) Use of the vehicle is in accordance with Council's <u>Light Vehicle Policy</u>
  - (b) The vehicle must only be utilised for official Council business
  - (c) Any damage, accident or fault is to be reported to the Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO as soon as practicable
  - (d) The use of carpooling of the Council fleet vehicles by Councillors must be considered to reduce cost to Ratepayers.

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#### 11.2 Private Vehicle Use

- 11.2.1 Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses incurred in the use of their private vehicle, including electric vehicles, for Council purposes.
- 11.2.2 Reasonable travel expenses include travel to and from:
  - meetings of community groups, organisations and statutory authorities to which the Councillor has been appointed as the Council delegate;
  - · site inspections or meetings; and
  - any meeting or other activity which Council formally resolves the Councillor should attend in an official capacity to represent the Council.
- 11.2.3 In the event that a Councillor is involved in an accident in their private vehicle, whilst on official Council business, Council will refund any excess paid up to the amount of \$500.00 upon presentation of current Car Insurance Policy Documents.
- 11.2.4 All travel claims will be from the Councillor's notified place of residence. All expense claims must be submitted on the Councillor Reimbursement of Expense Claim Form for Private Vehicle Usage (Appendix C). The Councillor will be reimbursed in accordance with the applicable and current vehicle allowance as specified in the City of Whittlesea Enterprise Agreement in operation at the time claims are submitted.
- 11.2.5 Councillors that have an environmentally friendly vehicle which does not fit a standard cylinder vehicle classification are eligible for the 4 cylinder or less vehicle reimbursement classification amount.
- 11.2.6 Vehicle travel that exceeds an individual round trip of 600km requires CEO prior approval.

## 11.3 Taxi / Uber

- 11.3.1 Where it is not possible or convenient to use public transport or a private motor vehicle, a taxi or Uber service can be used by Councillors for travel required for their official duties. Councillors will be supplied, upon request, with a Cabcharge Card or eTICKET.
- 11.3.2 If a Councillor incurs costs for the use of a Cabcharge Card or eTICKET in any month, the OCCEO will send the Councillor a copy of those charges along with a Councillor's Declaration of Cabcharge Usage Form (Appendix A).

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- 11.3.2.1 The Councillor's Declaration or Cabcharge usage Form must be completed and returned to the OCCEO via email: (Email address yet TBC) within 14 days of the account being sent.
- 11.3.3 Expenses incurred will be recorded against the Councillor on the Councillor Expense Register.

#### 11.4 Interstate Travel

- 11.4.1 Interstate travel for official Council business is subject to the following terms and conditions:
  - (a) Councillors must obtain approval from the Council by way of a resolution at a Council meeting that is open to the public, prior to travel;
  - (b) The OCCEO will arrange travel including:
    - Registration;
    - Transportation; and
    - Accommodation.
- 11.4.2 The CEO will maintain a register of interstate travel in accordance with the legislation.

#### 11.5 International Travel

- 11.5.1 International travel for official Council business is subject to the following terms and conditions:
  - (a) Councillors must obtain approval from the Council by way of a resolution at a Council meeting that is open to the public, prior to travel;
  - (b) The OCCEO will arrange travel including:
    - Registration;
    - Transport
    - Accommodation and meals
    - Insurance
  - (c) Councillors must obtain written approval from the CEO prior to taking Council equipment on any international travel, private or Council related.
  - (d) If approval is granted by the CEO, the Councillor must consult with the OCCEO to discuss the most effective travel packs to be purchased for work related usage.
  - (e) The coordination of access to international voice and data services and the cost of all calls and data usage related to international travel for personal reasons are the responsibility of the Councillor, not the organisation.
  - (f) The Councillor will be responsible to ensure phone settings are adjusted to avoid unexpected call and data charges.

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- (g) To ensure the appropriate protection of Council information and data, and in accordance with advice from ASIO, alternate mobile phones, electronic devices and phone numbers may be allocated by the CEO. Access to some systems may be restricted at the discretion of the CEO.
- (h) Any excessive costs as assessed by the CEO, incurred by a Councillor whilst travelling overseas, must reimbursed to Council by the relevant Councillor within 14 days.
- 11.5.2 The CEO will maintain a register of international travel in accordance with the legislation.

#### 11.6 Infringements

11.6.1 The cost of any penalties incurred by the Councillor for road, traffic or parking infringement, or other similar penalties or fines, will not be reimbursed by Council.

#### 12.1 Private Use of Council Issued Equipment

- 12.1.1 Private use of a Council issued device, including data, above 10% must be declared by the Councillor and must be reimbursed to Council.
- 12.1.2 The Governance Team will provide a Declaration Usage of Resources Form (Appendix B) via email to Councillors on quarterly basis, which will specify the monthly cost of the Council provided mobile phone and internet data plan. Itemised accounts will also be provided to each Councillor of their mobile phone and data accounts.
- 12.1.3 Each Councillor must make an estimate of their private use and declare on the Declaration of Usage Resources Form that:
  - (a) no more than 10% of the call charges of the Council provided mobile phone (up to a maximum monthly cost of \$20) is attributable to incidental private use;
  - (b) no more that 10% of the internet connection plan is attributable to private use.
- 12.1.4 Each Councillor must sign, and date the Councillor's Declaration Usage of Resources Form and return it to the Governance Team via email (Email address yet TBC) within 14 days of the details being sent.

#### 13.1 Child or Dependent Care

- 13.1.1 In accordance with sections 41(2)(c)-(d) of the Act, Council will reimburse the cost to a Councillor or delegated committee member where, when on official Council business:
  - the provision of childcare is reasonably required
  - the provision of care for a dependent is reasonably required
- 13.1.2 Care expenses, that are not funded by any other parties, may be claimed include but are not limited to:
  - · childcare centre fees
  - home care

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- hourly fees
- agency booking fees
- reasonable travel expenses for transporting the carer to the dependent or the dependent to the carer
- 13.1.3 Except by prior written agreement of the CEO or Executive Manager Office of the Council and CEO, payments for carer and childcare services will not be made:
  - to a person who resides with the Councillor
  - has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor
  - has a relationship with the Councillor or their partner (i.e. immediate family member)
  - has recognised care responsibility (i.e. parent or other regular caregiver)
- 13.1.4 Evidence of out-of-pocket costs incurred by the Councillor must be provided with any claim.
  - 13.1.4.1 Any claims for child or dependent care by a Councillor will be considered and have regard to the definitions and provisions of the *Carers Recognition Act* 2012.

#### 14.1 Training and Development

- 14.1.1 It is important Council identifies the training needs of Councillors and ensures that they have access to ongoing training and professional development throughout their elected term.
- 14.1.2 Training and professional development by Councillors must be directly related to their performance as a Councillor. Such training and development could involve seminars, conferences, and more formal study courses.
- 14.1.3 Council will provide a maximum of \$10,000 per financial year per Councillor, \$5,000 in the final year of a Councillor term, for training and professional development (refer Note 1). All approved associated costs will be recorded against the individual on the Councillor Expense Register.
- 14.1.4 Where a Councillor training and professional development involves related costs such as accommodation, travel, or other general costs, these should be identified by the Councillor when seeking prior written approval from the CEO.
  - **Note 1** The CEO may upon written application consider approving training and professional development opportunities, or conference attendance that exceeds the annual \$10,000 per Councillor threshold subject to available budget. If approved, the individual Councillor's annual training and development budget allocation will be apportioned over the remaining Council term.
- 14.1.5 No training or training expenses will be approved, in the final six (6) months of a Councillor term.

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#### 14.2 Councillor Group Training and Development

14.2.1 The CEO or their nominated delegate, in consultation with Councillors, will identify group training and development opportunities. This group training is in addition to any mandatory training as determined by the CEO and in accordance with the Local Government Act. Where group training is organised, the allocated total cost will be apportioned against all Councillors whether in attendance or not.

#### 14.3 Training and Development Pre-Approval Process

- 14.3.1 Councillors will seek CEO pre-approval for the funding of training and development or conference attendance prior to the training taking place.
- 14.3.2 Training, development or conference attendance will be arranged by the OCCEO.
- 14.3.3 Councillors will outline the benefit and reasons when seeking approval.

#### 14.4 Authorisation

- 14.4.1 The CEO, unless otherwise resolved by Council, is authorised to approve the funding of Councillors' attendance at training and development or confirming attendance and payment for events on criteria that ensures:
  - attendance is in the community interest and reflects the identified needs of the Councillor
  - equity, fair and reasonable access to all Councillors to training and development, noting that events will generally be attended by the Mayor in the first instance.

## 14.5 Attendance at Events When Performing Duties as a Councillor

- 14.5.1 Councillors may seek approval from the CEO to attend official events when performing duties as a Councillor and have these costs paid for by Council or reimbursed, as outlined in Section 15.
- 14.5.2 Events must be directly related to the municipality and must not be events organised by political parties.
- 14.5.3 This section is to be read in conjunction with the Council's Gift Policy.

#### 15. Reimbursements

#### 15.1 Mobile Phone Reimbursement

15.1.1 Where a Councillor chooses to use their own mobile phone, reimbursement of official Council business calls can be claimed.

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15.1.2 A Councillor seeking reimbursement must submit their mobile phone account to the OCCEO highlighting the call and data charges that are attributable to performing their official duties as a Councillor.

#### 15.2 Expenses Reimbursement

- 15.2.1 All claims must be made on the approved expense reimbursement form or the online platform which Council makes available.
- 15.2.2 Original receipts must be attached for all claims. Credit Card Eftpos receipts will not be accepted, an accompanying Tax Invoice must be included.
- 15.2.3 In any case where a Councillor is unable to provide a receipt of costs incurred, a Statutory Declaration may be accepted by the CEO. Appropriate and sufficient reasoning for being unable to produce a receipt must be provided by the Councillor. The CEO has the discretion to accept or reject a Statutory Declaration.
- 15.2.4 Claims must be lodged with the OCCEO within 7 days of the end of each month.
- 15.2.5 Reimbursements will be provided monthly by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

#### 15.3 General Expenditure Reimbursement

- 15.3.1 General expenditure incurred may be claimable and must relate directly to the performance of duties as a Councillor.
  - 15.3.1.1 General expenditure may include such expenses as the reasonable and minor purchase of refreshments (i.e. a coffee), car parking and public transport tickets.
- 15.3.2 A claim for reimbursement of general expenditure requires evidence in the form of a Tax Invoice including name and address of the supplier and details of the goods or services supplied.
- 15.3.3 Reimbursements will be paid by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) within 21 days of receipt and approval of a properly completed Councillor Reimbursement of Expenses Claim Form (Appendix D).

#### 16. Submitting Claims

- All claims for reimbursement must be fully substantiated and details lodged on the Councillor Reimbursement of Expenses Claim Form (Appendix D).
  - 16.1.1.1 The period for the lodgement of any claim must not exceed three (3) months without written approval of the CEO.
  - 16.1.1.2 No claims will be permitted that exceed three (3) months.
  - 16.1.1.3 Any outstanding claims at the end of a financial year must be submitted within two (2) weeks after the start of a new financial year.

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#### 17. Approval of Claims

17.1 Claims for reimbursement of expenses by Councillors must be approved by the CEO or their delegate. Mayoral expenses shall be approved jointly by the CEO and Executive Manager Office of Council and CEO.

#### 18. General

- 18.1 The following general provisions apply to out-of-pocket expenses that will be reimbursed to, or paid on behalf of, a Councillor:
  - Travel must be undertaken as efficiently and by the shortest route possible.
  - Where domestic travel is by air, including New Zealand, Economy bookings will be the standard.
  - For international travel, excluding New Zealand, Business Class bookings will be the standard.
  - Travel claims will only be made on the basis of the actual form of transport used.
  - Expenses incurred that are not directly related to the official Council duties of a Councillor, cannot be included in the calculation of a claim for reimbursement.
  - Council will not incur any costs associated with the travel or accommodation or any other incidentals of others, including partner, children, etc.
  - Travel arrangements for attendance at interstate or international events will be scheduled for the Councillor to arrive one (1) day prior to the event and one (1) day after the event unless otherwise agreed to by the CEO.
  - The selection of airlines, hotels, transfer providers and any other arrangements will be determined by the CEO with all bookings being made by the OCCEO.
  - Councillors will not be reimbursed for any arrangements (ie. booking of flights, accommodation, etc) that have been made directly by the Councillor.

## 19. Other Support and Assistance

#### 19.1 Mayoral Support

- 19.1.1 Administrative support will be made available during business hours by the EA to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to assist the performance of their official duties.
- 19.1.2 Office accommodation and associated equipment will be provided to assist the Mayor at the City of Whittlesea, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.

#### 19.2 Building Access

19.2.1 Each Councillor will receive a security access card allowing 24 hour access to the Councillors Room, meeting rooms and CEO office area only at City of Whittlesea, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.

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#### 19.3 Car Parking

- 19.3.1 Car parking will be available for the Mayor in the underground car park at the City of Whittlesea, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.
- 19.3.2 Car parking will be available for Councillors at the City of Whittlesea, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.
- 19.3.3 Councillors will be required to register their vehicle at the commencement of their term, and advise of any changes to vehicle use, to avoid the issuing of any Parking Infringements in the vicinity of the City of Whittlesea, Council Offices, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang.

#### 19.4 Meeting Rooms and the Councillors Room

- 19.4.1 The Councillors Room is reserved for exclusive use by Councillors. The room is equipped with computer access and a printer and is suitable for office work, reading and research and small meetings.
- 19.4.2 Light refreshments, including water, tea/coffee and soft drinks will be made available in the Councillors Room.
- 19.4.3 Councillors private and secure pigeon holes are located within the Councillors Room.
- 19.4.4 With advanced notice, other meeting rooms at the City of Whittlesea, Council Office, 25 Ferres Boulevard, South Morang, may be secured for meetings through the OCCEO. Meeting equipment, tea/coffee and water can be made available for meetings upon request.
- 19.4.5 A Councillor must not make a booking on behalf of a community member.

#### 19.5 Administrative Support and Stationery / Mail / Miscellaneous

- 19.5.1 Reasonable administrative support will be made available during normal business hours by the OCCEO primarily in the form of assistance with diary management, responding to correspondence, enquiries and requests for service as part of their official duties as a Councillor.
- 19.5.2 On request, the OCCEO will manage reasonable requests for stationery held or obtained for the Council requirements.
  - 19.5.2.1 E-card templates for significate dates will be made available for use by individual Councillors. It is the Councillor responsibility for sending these E-cards.
- 19.5.3 Each Councillor will be provided with two (2) City of Whittlesea name badges for use while on Council business.

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- 19.5.4 Council meeting papers and the majority of information from the organisation will only be made available electronically. Appropriate system training and support will be provided to all Councillors.
  - 19.5.4.1 No paper/printed copies of Council meeting papers or Minutes will be provided unless Section 19.7.1 applies.
- 19.5.5 Where Council or delegated Committee meetings extend through normal meal times, Council will provide suitable meals served on the premises.

#### 19.6. Professional Memberships and Subscriptions

- 19.6.1 The CEO may approve the costs of joining an ongoing membership of relevant professional associations where they are satisfied that the membership will enhance the Councillor's development.
- 19.6.2 Any Membership or Subscription is due for payment within the last six (6) months of the Councillor term, will not be paid by Council.

#### 19.7 Access and Inclusion

- 19.7.1 Council is committed to ensuring equitable access, social inclusion and respect for human rights and may provide appropriate support to ensure Councillors can complete their duties proficiently.
- 19.7.2 Council will meet reasonable expenses to assist a Councillor with a disability in performing their role as a Councillor. The CEO will be responsible for facilitating any process or plan to best support a Councillor.

#### 19.8 Councillors' Welfare

- 19.8.1 The Mayor and CEO can provide support to Councillors, specific guidance or coaching that may be required to enhance their performance as a Councillor.
  - 19.8.1.1 A Councillor is entitled to counselling on a confidential basis through Council's approved Employee Assistance Program.

#### 19.9 Civic and Community Events

- 19.9.1 From time to time, Council representatives are invited to attend community functions and events. It is usual for the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor to represent the Council at these functions and any payment required to attend the function is paid by the Council.
  - 19.9.1.1 If another Councillor attends the function, either representing the Mayor or in an official capacity as Council representative to that particular group, any attendance charge will be paid by the Council.

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- 19.9.2 The cost of Council representatives attending civic functions and events hosted by other Councils will be paid by the Council.
- 19.9.3 Council will not be responsible for coordinating Councillor attendance or providing support for any political events.

#### 20. Insurance

- 20.1 Councillors are covered by the following Council Insurance Policies, whilst performing official duties:
  - (a) Public liability
  - (b) Professional indemnity
  - (c) Councillors and Officers Liability
  - (d) Workcover
  - (e) Personal Accident
- 20.2 Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor arising whilst performing duties, where the claim is accepted by Council's Insurers.
- 20.3 Insurance does not cover any criminal, wilful or negligent acts of the Councillor or related parties, which remain the responsibility of individual Councillors.

## 21. Accountability and Audit

#### 21.1 Claiming of Expenses

21.1.1 Councillors are accountable for completing the Councillor Reimbursement of Expense Claim Form (Appendix D) in accordance with this policy and submitting the Form to the Governance Team.

#### 21.2 Audit and Reporting

- 21.2.1 Quarterly reporting, in accordance with the Local Government Act, on Councillor mandatory expense categories and reimbursements will be reported to Council in the following format i.e. details of expenses, including reimbursement of expenses for each Councillor categorised separately as:
  - (a) Travel Expenses (including car mileage, flights, Cabcharge or equivalent and accommodation expenses)
  - (b) Dependant and Childcare Expenses
  - (c) Information and Communications Technology Expenses (specifying mobile phone expenses and data cost)
  - (d) Conference and Training Expenses

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- (e) Functions / Events Expenses (including all costs associated with attendance)
- (f) Councillor Allowances
- 21.2.2 These reports will be:
  - submitted to the City of Whittlesea Audit and Risk Committee on a six (6) monthly basis;
  - included in Council's Annual Report; and
  - made available on the City of Whittlesea website on a quarterly basis.
- 21.2.3 To ensure public transparency 'Miscellaneous' expenses which are expenses that are not captured by the categories listed in 21.2.1 will also be reported.
- 21.2.4 Audits of Councillor expenses and reimbursements may be carried out from time to time as part of Council's annual audit program.

#### Forms

#### Councillor Expense Reimbursement and Support Policy - Draft Forms.docx (sharepoint.com)

Appendix A – Councillor's Declaration of CabCharge Usage

Appendix B – Councillor's Declaration of Usage of Resources

Appendix C – Councillor Reimbursement of Expense Claim Form for Private Vehicle Usage

Appendix D – Councillor Reimbursement of Expense Claim Form

Appendix E – Councillor Reimbursement of Expense Claim Form – Interstate Travel

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# 5.9 Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation under the Planning and Environment Act 1987

**Director/Executive Manager:** Executive Manager Office of Council & CEO

**Report Author:** Coordinator Governance Administration

## **Executive Summary**

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* requires that Council by resolution to appoint Authorised Officers to exercise their powers under the Act. This power cannot be delegated to the CEO.

An Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation (the Instrument) in relation to the administration and enforcement of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* by various Officers across the organisation has been prepared and requires authorisation.

# Officers' Recommendation

## **THAT Council:**

- 1. Appoints the Council Officers referred to in the instrument in Attachment 1 as Authorised Officers under section 147(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act* 1987 and section 313 of the *Local Government Act* 2020.
- 2. Notes the Instrument will come into effect immediately it is signed, and the common seal affixed.
- 3. Notes the Instrument will remain in force until Council determines to vary or revoke it.



## Background / Key Information

The Instrument has been prepared for the Officers named who require authorisation in relation to the administration and enforcement of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and carry out the functions outlined in Section 313 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

This enables the Officers to effectively perform duties including enforcing and implementing the planning scheme, entering land and bring a planning and environment matter to court if required.

The Instrument will come into effect when it is executed and will remain in force until Council decides to vary or revoke it.

## Alignment to Community Plan, Policies or Strategies

Alignment to Whittlesea 2040 and Community Plan 2021-2025:

#### **High Performing Organisation**

We engage effectively with the community, to deliver efficient and effective services and initiatives, and to make decisions in the best interest of our community and deliver value to our community.

The Instrument of Delegation will enable the authorised Officers to fulfill their statutory duties.

## Considerations of *Local Government Act (2020)* Principles

## **Financial Management**

The cost is included in the current budget.

## **Community Consultation and Engagement**

Relevant Council Departments who require this authorisation have been consulted on the drafted Instrument.

## Other Principles for Consideration as per the Local Government Act (2020)

## **Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles**

(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.

## **Public Transparency Principles**

(a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of the *Local Government Act* or any other Act.



## **Council Policy Considerations**

#### **Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

This authorisation gives the relevant Council Officers the power to perform their duties as prescribed under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* in order to avoid potential negative impacts on the community and the environment. Potential negative impacts may include noise, odour, dust, air pollutants and stormwater contamination. The surrounding environment can also affect land uses.

For example, from contamination from land and groundwater or landfill gas migration. This authorisation promotes the protection of land and environment, and proficient land use planning which ensures that risks are identified early in the planning process and that harmful outcomes are avoided.

#### Social, Cultural and Health

No Implications

#### **Economic**

No Implications

## Legal, Resource and Strategic Risk Implications

No Implications

## **Implementation Strategy**

#### Communication

Confirmation of the Instrument will be shared with relevant Departments and individual officers named on the Instrument.

#### **Critical Dates**

It is important that this Instruments of Appointment and Authorisation is executed at the 21 November 2023 Council Meeting to ensure the Council Officers named have the essential authorisations to carry out the required duties.

#### **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

Under Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* officers providing advice to Council are required to disclose any conflict of interest they have in a matter and explain the nature of the conflict.

The Responsible Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.



# Attachments

1. S 11 A - Delegations - Instrument of Appointment (PE Act) November 2023 [**5.9.1** - 2 pages]



# **City of Whittlesea Council**

# **S11A Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation**

(Planning and Environment Act 1987 only)



# **Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation** (Planning and Environment Act 1987)

In this instrument "officer" means -

Oluwadunsin Ajulo **Emma Appleton** Will Lan

By this instrument of appointment and authorisation City of Whittlesea Council -

- 1. under s 147(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 - appoints the officers to be authorised officers for the purposes of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the regulations made under that Act; and
- under s 313 of the Local Government Act 2020 authorises the officers either generally or in a particular case to institute proceedings for offences against the Acts and regulations described in this instrument.

## It is declared that this instrument -

- comes into force immediately upon its execution;
- remains in force until varied or revoked.

This instrument is authorised by a resolution of the City of Whittlesea Council on 21 November 2023.

**Chair of Administrators** 

**Chief Executive Officer** 

Date: 22 November 2023

S11A – Instrument of Appointment and Authorisation (*Planning and Environment Act 1987*) November 2023 Update

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## **6** Notices of Motion

No Notices of Motion

# 7 Urgent Business

No Urgent Business

# 8 Reports from Council Representatives and CEO Update

## 9 Confidential Business

## 9.0.0 Close Meeting to the Public

Under section 66(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020* a meeting considering confidential information may be closed to the public. Pursuant to sections 3(1) and 66(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

#### Recommendation

THAT the Chair of Council recommends that the meeting be closed to the public for the purpose of considering details relating to the following confidential matters in accordance with Section 66(2)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2020* as detailed.

# 9.1 Confidential Reports

No Reports

## 10 Closure