

Stage 2 Engagement Findings Report

Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation Project



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Executive Summary



Consultation highlights

The Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation Project included two stages of community engagement to support the development and refinement of a Signage and Facilities Upgrade Plan. This report presents findings from Stage Two community engagement, conducted between 5 February 2023 and 6 March 2023.

Key findings from this engagement include:

- Broad community interest to learn about local plants and animals at the wetlands, and how individuals can play a role to protect the wetlands.
- Interest in learning about Aboriginal Cultural values at the wetlands, with a variety of questions relating to local history and land use.
- Support for use of QR codes on interpretative signage with some participants, particularly youth, interested in augmented reality options.
- Minimal comment or objection about the proposed site activations.

Key engagement statistics

The engagement program included an online survey, online form, and two pop-up engagement events at the wetlands.

These methods resulted in 179 activities completed including 89 in person engagements at Seaford Wetlands.

Barriers to engagement

During community consultations, there are often limitations to the engagement overall and/or specific engagement activities. The limitations of this consultation have been identified as:

COVID-19

The engagement period coincided with an increase in COVID cases being reported. This may have affected participation at in person engagement events.

Complex subject matter

The Draft Signage and Facilities Upgrades Plan is a lengthy and detailed document. This may have impacted the number of people who engaged with the details of the plan.

Introduction



Overview

Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation project is part of the Victorian Government's \$315 million Suburban Parks Program to create more than 6,500 hectares of new and upgraded parks and trails across Melbourne's outer suburbs.

As part of this program, the Victorian Government is funding \$5 million of upgrades at Seaford Wetlands with a focus on:

- Improving safety, access, and connection for visitors
- Strengthening the wetlands' ecological health
- Embedding cultural values into the wetlands' design and management.

The program delivers on the Victorian Government's [Open Space for Everyone Strategy](#), which is a blueprint guiding the planning, management, and delivery of Melbourne's open spaces for the next 30 years.

In March 2022, we consulted with our community on how we can improve and enhance the Seaford Wetlands as part of the Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation Project. Community feedback helped to inform the Draft Signage and Facilities Upgrade Plan for the wetlands.

A second stage of engagement occurred 5 February 2023 to 5 March 2023, to test the draft Plan with the community, and seek feedback on the proposed signage and Biocultural trail.

This report provides a summary of engagement findings from the second stage of engagement and makes recommendations for the next stages of the project.

Engagement Details



Purpose

This engagement tested the draft Signage and Facilities Upgrade Plan with the community, to assess sentiment towards the plan and understand preferences and ideas for signage content.

Objectives

This consultation sought to understand the level of support for the Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation project. It also aimed to build a list of signage ideas that are in scope for the wayfinding, interpretative and biocultural trail signage funded within this project.

Communication materials

Communication is used to invite community to participate in engagement and to understand any information that is needed to make an informed response. This stage of engagement used a range of communications materials to reach different audiences within the community. These included:

- Dedicated web page on Engage Frankston!
- Featured in local newspaper Frankston City News delivered to 60,000 homes
- Email campaign to 104 people following the project through Engage Frankston!
- Email campaign to 316 people who had registered an interest in Environment; Parks and recreation; Planning, design and renewal; and Seaford.
- Project signage around Seaford Wetlands.
- Postcards distributed to surrounding properties.
- Posters with project information displayed at in person engagement events.
- The full-length Draft Facilities and Upgrade Plan available for download, and available in print at pop-up engagement events.
- The project team informed previously engaged community organisations and schools of the engagement by direct phone call or email.

Community pop-ups

Place based events invite people who currently use a space to participate in community engagement. Where possible, pop-up events are held across at least one weekday and one weekend to reach different audiences. Council hosted two pop-up engagement events near the Austin Road viewing platform at Seaford Wetlands on:

Thursday February 6th 1:30pm

Sunday February 26th 10:30am

Online

Online engagement is used to reach a broad community audience. Our engagement website supports text-based language translation and is screen reader compatible.

Online Survey

An online survey was available on Engage Frankston from 5 February 2023 to 6 March 2023. Participants could download the Draft Plan and respond to the question “Have we got it right? Provide your feedback about the Final Draft Signage and Facilities Upgrade Plan.” Additionally, participants could respond to a brief survey to share if they are likely to use QR code and augmented reality technology, and to nominate information they would like to see on signage throughout the wetlands.

Social Media

The project was promoted through the following social media channels:

- Organic Facebook post on 6 February 2023 that reached 3907 people
- Sponsored Facebook post ran from 8 Feb to 28 Feb and reached 32,000 people and achieved 1717 link clicks.
- Organic Facebook post on 23 February 2023 that reached 1845 people

Engage Frankston!

The Seaford Wetlands Rejuvenation Project was promoted with an email to project followers who subscribed to receive updates. Stage two of the engagement was published on Engage Frankston from 5 February 2023 to 6 March 2023.

Visitors to the page could read summary information about the project, access the findings from stage one engagement, and download the full Draft Signage and Facilities Upgrade Plan from a document library.

Consultation outcomes



Participation

The following table shows the number of participants for each engagement activity. Please note that there was likely some duplication in participation, for example, the same person may have completed an online survey and attended a pop-up event.

Engagement Activity	Date	Number of Participants
Online Survey – Have we got it right?	5 February to 6 March 2023	37
Online Survey – Learning about the wetlands through signage.	5 February to 6 March 2023	53
Pop-up engagement event at Austin Road Viewing Platform	1:30pm Thursday 9 February 2023	24
Pop-up engagement event at Austin Road Viewing Platform	10:30am Sunday 26 February 2023	65
Total activities completed		179

Engagement Findings

Stage two community engagement received 242 free text responses across all activities and questions. Around half of these (148) related to signage, with other themes including facilities (79), Aboriginal cultural values (37), and the broader project or stakeholders (36). There were also some concerns raised about signage, particularly regarding the accessibility of signage.



Aboriginal Cultural Values

Participants were asked “What would you like to know about Aboriginal Cultural Values at the wetlands?”

There were 45 free text responses relating to Aboriginal cultural values at the wetlands. Notably, a number of these responses were unaware that there are present day Aboriginal values for this location “I am very interested in the First Nations people and their lives and use of the wetlands, but suspect that the wetlands has nothing left from Aboriginal times.” There were also some comments about self-determination when populating signage “I want Aboriginal people to decide what they want to share with our local community”

Areas of interest included:

- How Aboriginal communities have used the wetlands over time, up to the current day.
- Local Aboriginal history linked to the wetlands including key people and events.
- Caretaking and land management of the wetlands.
- How the geological features of the wetlands have changed over time, including changes to local flora and fauna.
- Uses for indigenous plants
- Indigenous naming and words alongside their European names
- Identifying any archaeological evidence on the wetlands (taking care not to invite disturbance of archaeological sites.)

Questions from participants about Aboriginal Cultural Values at the wetlands

- How is the wetlands used by the Bunurong people?
- How has the wetlands changed over time/with European settlement?
- How are plants from the wetlands used? (School aged participant)
- What are the Aboriginal words for local plants and animals? (School aged participant)
- What role did the wetlands play in the daily life of Indigenous people?



Signage

Participants were asked “What would you like to know about Seaford Wetlands?” Across all free text responses, there were 120 comments made about signage including 103 content suggestions,

Content ideas largely focused on a few key themes – flora and fauna, caretaking, and local history. There was also feedback about the design of signage, and suggestions for wayfinding signage.

Flora and Fauna

Participants made 60 comments about flora and fauna information on interpretative signage. There was particular interest in signage to assist with species identification, learning about local ecosystems (including pest species) and lifecycles.

When describing desired signage, pop-up facilitators noted enthusiasm for graphic signage concepts such as maps depicting migratory paths, pictures of different species, or graphics to show cross sections of the earth or sorting animals into air, water and earth.

Comments from the community about flora and fauna signage:

“Signage divided up to show air, land and water animals”

“Signage that shows the pictures and names of bird species eg. 100 species of birds found at Seaford Wetlands”

“Plants as habitat and as food - how do plants fit into the local ecosystem”

“A map showing the migration paths of birds”

“Importance of breeding and resting places for migratory birds”

Birdlife (22 comments)

- Identifying bird species seen at the wetlands through pictures
- Showing migratory paths on a map
- Emphasising the international significance of the wetlands to birdlife
- Describing the ecosystems that support migratory birds “Why do they come here?”



Other wildlife (25 comments)

These comments represent a desire to extend on community knowledge of birdlife to learn about animals of the land and water.

- Lifecycles (e.g tadpole, frog, egg)
- Ecosystems to show how plants and animals coexist (predator/prey, food, nesting materials)
- Endangered and pest species
- Frogs featured in five comments
- Animals of the air, land and water

Caretaking

There were 8 comments requesting information about caretaking on signage.

Caretaking signage ideas

- Responsible dog ownership
- Sustainability projects
- RAMSAR Protection status
- “Don’t feed the ducks bread”
- Identifying protection and caretaking issues e.g. *do not enter, keep dogs on leads, don’t feed the ducks bread*
- Bunurong caretaking and land management at the wetlands

Local History

There were 25 comments about local history. This included comments wanting to learn more about Aboriginal history and others with an interest in geological or European history.

How did Bunurong people move through and live in this space pre-colonisation? What flora and fauna species did/do they use and are those species still here?

- Considering natural, indigenous and European history
- Consulting local historical groups when researching content for signage

Other signage feedback

In addition to content suggestions there were 29 comments about the format or design of the proposed signs, 13 about accessibility and 14 other comments.



Wayfinding signage

There were 14 comments about wayfinding signage. These expressed interest in:

- Aboriginal language and place naming
- Distance markers for counting kilometres during exercise
- Distance to nearest facilities
- Compass marker (North, South, East, West)
- Directional information for cyclists looking to do an extended ride. E.g., “Jells Park, Mornington, Seaford Foreshore, City”

Comments from the community:

“Would like to see Aboriginal language used on WAYFINDING signage (not just on information signage)”

“I think the traditional name should also be written prominently alongside it, “Lowyeeung””

Format and Design of Signage

Community provided feedback about the overall look and function on signage at the wetlands. The following list summarises feedback that was provided by participants about signage.

- Large font size. Participants noted that they don’t wear or have their reading glasses with them when out walking or riding.
- Large font size. Cyclists would like to be able to read signage without dismounting from their bikes.
- Participants with fine motor disabilities may not be able to access QR and AR technology
- Perceiving that some proposed signage does not have a consistent look and feel
- Identifying that QR codes may allow for minimal clutter on signage, or fewer signs being required overall.
- Some participants raised concerns about the number of sign being proposed, or the scale of larger signs detracting from the natural environment.



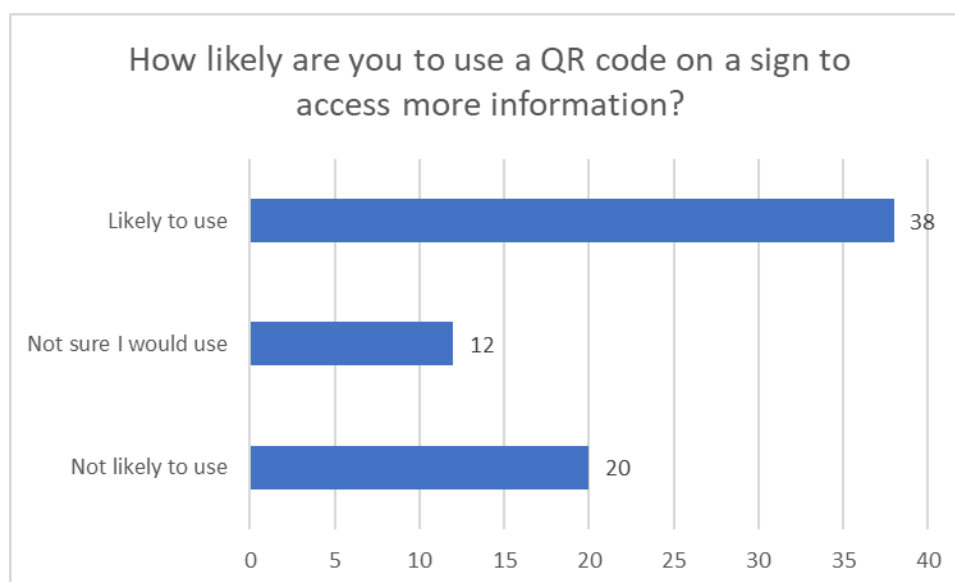
- One person noted that where possible, consider facing signage south or south east to reduce fading over time.

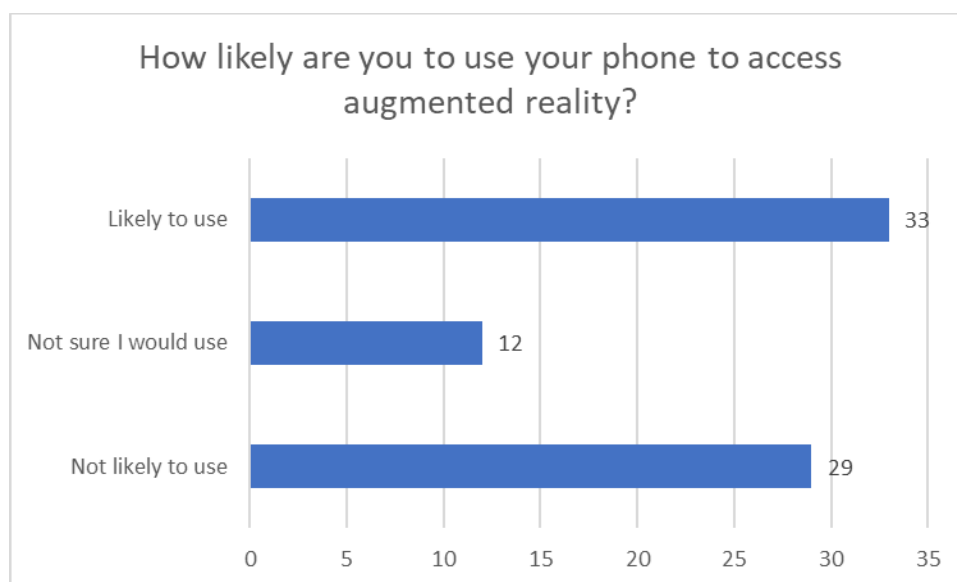
Technology and Signage

The draft Plan proposes to use QR codes and augmented reality to enhance interpretative signage throughout the wetlands.

Participants were asked “how likely are you to use a QR code on a sign to access more information?” and “How likely are you to use your phone to access augmented reality?”

Participants could choose from three pre-filled options – *Not likely to use*, *Not sure I would use*, and, *Likely to use*. Results from all methods are collated and presented in the charts below.





There were 25 free text comments from across all questions and activities that related to QR code or augmented reality signage including the following ideas:

- Using QR codes to access a drone video tour of the wetlands.
- Use of QR codes to access frog sounds and bird calls to identify different species.
- Providing a tour or start up guide for using QR and augmented reality technology.

There were also some concerns raised about QR and augmented reality use including.

- A person with disability reported they can't use a phone for QR codes or AR and prefers information presented on the signage itself.
- Anecdotal reports that augmented reality applications may require a lot of mobile data to download and/or storage space on phones.
- Several comments referred to people wishing to leave their technology at home when experiencing the wetlands.

Facilities Upgrades

Across all methods and questions, there were 80 comments requesting new or upgraded facilities at Seaford Wetlands. From these there were 30 comments related to paths, 19 related to public toilets, 7 requesting drinking fountains and 5 requesting bins. Feedback about each area is summarised below.



Paths

- That existing paths require widening to support increased use.
- That paths are prone to flooding, and may benefit from realigning the paths to higher ground or establishing a raised boardwalk.
- Requests to establish or re-establish shared user paths *through* the RAMSAR protected area or on the southern bank of Kananook Canal.
- Several residents of Palm Beach Drive provided feedback about the proposed shared user path planned for behind their properties.

Public Toilets

- That public toilets are a necessity after completing a circuit walk/ride.
- The public toilets would allow families with young children and people with disabilities to visit the wetlands with confidence.
- That public toilets will encourage people to stay longer or later into the evening.
- That public toilets will encourage people to bring a picnic and therefore increases the risk of littering.
- That public toilets may attract antisocial behaviour.

Drinking Fountains

- That drinking fountains are a logical inclusion because the wetlands are commonly used for exercising.
- That drinking taps are needed more urgently than other projects which have been included in this round of funding.

Bins

- That rubbish bins should be provided
- That dog poo bags and bins should be provided

Other feedback about facilities

Other feedback included an interest in an improved bird hide (supported by school aged participants and others), a 'modest playground', exercise equipment, speed bumps and other motorcycling prevention infrastructure.



Perceptions of Safety

A small number of comments related to perceptions of safety and civic pride.

Graffiti

Some participants noted graffiti on signage is a current issue and were concerned that it would continue onto the new signage. A couple of participants asked about the use of graffiti resistant coatings to protect the new signage.

Monkey Bikes

Several participants referred to the use of motorised dirt bikes within the Seaford Wetlands and in the surrounding area. A couple of participants requested infrastructure to deter dirt bike/monkey bike riding such as pedestrian mazes and CCTV.

Disruptive Behaviour

Some participants were concerned that improved facilities would encourage antisocial or disruptive behaviour such as evening gatherings, larger gatherings (gathering place) or staying overnight (toilets).





Recommendations

Based on feedback received from this stage of broad community engagement, and not based on feedback from other stakeholders or subject matter experts, the following actions are recommended for further consideration.

- Prioritise creating a shared user path circuit around the entire wetlands.
- Retain the north, west and south nodes in the draft Facilities and Signage Plan as currently designed.
- Design signage which features images and graphics to help people learn more about the wetlands, particularly species selection, migration paths, ecosystems and life cycles.
- Include signage information about current day Aboriginal Cultural Values at the wetlands, alongside other historical information.
- Include signage information about Aboriginal land care, land use, and local history, assuming an audience with no prior knowledge of Aboriginal Cultural values.
- If an augmented reality application is designed, consider developing this for a school aged audience.
- If QR code technology is included, consider using this to showcase audio and visual media, such species identification through frog sounds and bird calls, videos and narration.
- Use large font sizes on signage for people with minor vision impairment.
- Consider if the quantity of wayfinding signs can be slightly reduced through consolidation.
- Consider the inclusion of signage to promote stewardship of the wetlands, such as reminders about good dog ownerships, taking litter home with you and staying out of sensitive natural areas.
- Consider including distance markers and direction markers to compass points or other nearby locations.

Next steps

When community participate in engagement, it builds anticipation of what will come next. It is important to keep participants updated on how a project is progressing. This report should be made publicly available along with the final Facilities and Signage Upgrade Plan to help 'close the loop' on how community feedback was used.

