

Witternberg Reserve Native Vegetation Offset Proposal

Engagement Report - September 2023



Introduction

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Introduction

Consultation highlights

This engagement was undertaken by Frankston City Council to inform Frankston City Council's decision as to whether to proceed with a proposal to establish a Native Vegetation offset site within Wittenberg Bushland Reserve.

Highlights included:

- A strong participation rate of 302 contributions to the engagement, with a diversity of voices heard in the methods of engagement used.
- Engagement outcomes clearly showing that restricting access to the reserve has been perceived negatively by the community.
- Recommendations for a decision being provided in a timely manner to Council, which directly informed Council's decision not to proceed with the proposal.

Key engagement statistics

Community Engagement was undertaken in relation to the proposed native vegetation offsite and Witternberg Bushland Reserve between 1-27 August 2023 and during this engagement:

- 913 people visited the Engage Frankston site
- 302 people completed the survey, and of these 243 (80.4%) prefer the no change option (compared to 18 for option 1, 7 for option 2, 33 for option 3).

Introduction

Overview

Frankston City Council proposed to establish a Native Vegetation offset site within Wittenberg Bushland Reserve through entering into a Land Management Agreement with the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). The bushland 'offset' area would need to be fenced to restrict public access into the offset site (while still allowing corridor access through to Robinsons Park).

If Witternberg Bushland Reserve is established as a Native Vegetation Offset Site, community members would still be able to visit, enjoy and walk from the Reserve's playground through to Robinsons Park. However, importantly, public access would be restricted to designated tracks into the bushland. Some existing tracks would be closed off, and the remaining access tracks would be fenced such that all bushland areas would be out of bounds to the public.

If Council proceeds with this proposal, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) would need to approve the site and an Offset Management Plan. Following this, installation of fencing would likely commence in the 2023 – 2024 financial year.

The purpose of this engagement was to inform the community on why Council is proposing the fencing and establishing the site as a Native Vegetation Offset and seek feedback from all members of the community as to whether they support the offset site proposal along with the restricted reserve access that would be required, and if so, which access path option they prefer.

Four options for paths and access though the reserve were presented for community feedback, including three options for fenced walking tracks (with no public access to the bushland) and a fourth option for no change to the current reserve access and not to proceed with the establishment of an offset site at the reserve (refer to Appendix A).

This report provides a summary of the engagement process and outcomes and demonstrates how it meets Council's engagement principles of purpose, informed, representative, supportive, influence and report.

Purpose

Council is seeking community feedback on the proposal to establish Witternberg Bushland Reserve as a Native Vegetation offset site and options for how Witternberg Bushland Reserve could be fenced in order to facilitate the establishment of the offset site.

The engagement process also seeks to inform the community about why it is proposing to fence and establish a Native Vegetation Offset at the reserve.

Objectives

The objectives of this engagement process were to:

- Seek feedback on the establishment of the site as an Offset, including feedback on community preference for Council to instead not change access to the reserve and instead pay for offset sites in other Council areas
- Understand the community's support for the proposal, given a level of access restriction to the reserve is required in order for it to proceed
- Understand the community's preference for the location of the pathway fencing (within budgetary constraints and the requirement to enclose offset areas)
- Engage through cost-efficient and timely methods
- Meet legislative and policy requirements for community engagement.

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:

Technical nature of subject matter

Details regarding the offset proposal are of a more technical nature, which can be tricky to engage on in a simple and accessible format. Two community pop ups were held to enable

more detailed discussions to be held on the project, and community members were also invited to directly contact Council staff for further discussion.

Weather

Two outdoor community engagement pop ups were undertaken for this project, at Witternberg Reserve playground, and outside the Roundabout café. Given these were undertaken in winter, there was not as high a participation rate as would be expected in warmer weather, however engagement levels were still strong.

Community consultation process

Input into the Project was gathered in the following key ways during the community consultation period:

Table 1

External stakeholders	Consultation		
Local community, users of Witternberg Reserve and whole municipality	 Two community pop-up events: Saturday 5 August - 11am - 1pm Witternberg Reserve Playground Thursday 17 August - 10am - 12.30pm Roundabout Cafe, 1/19 Shaxton Cir. 		
Whole municipality	Online survey via Engage Frankston page ran from 1-27 August 2023 including background information to inform the community about native vegetation offsets and the proposal		
Whole municipality	Post on Council's Facebook page on 3 rd August 2023		
Whole municipality and users of the reserve	Signage (corflute posters) at all entrances inviting feedback 1 – 27 August 2023		
Whole community	Information and invitation to provide feedback provided in enews during period 1-27 th August 2023		
Local community	Postcard inviting feedback mailed to addresses located approximately 300 metres around the reserve - 1st August		
Local community	Letter mailed inviting feedback mailed to addresses immediately surrounding the reserve including the four schools closest to the reserve - 3 rd August 2023		
Frankston Environmental Friends Network (FEFN)	Presentation at Meeting on 12 th July 2023 inviting feedback and information in FEFN Newsletter		

Contributors to the Witternberg Reserve Master Plan	Contributors emailed inviting feedback 9 th August 2023
Frankston Baseball Club	Presentation and invitation to provide feedback at club meeting on 15 th August
Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC)	Information provided at internal council officer meeting with BLCAC
Aboriginal network stakeholder list	Information provided

Council consultation process

Internal consultation via face to face meetings and emails was undertaken with:

- The Environmental Policy and Planning team regarding the amount of offsets available at Witternberg Reserve and whether there are any other sites in Frankston eligible as native vegetation offset.
- Urban Design Unit and Capital Works teams regarding the connection between the proposed access pathways and the broader linkage throughout the reserve under the Witternberg Masterplan.
- Parks and Vegetation Unit regarding the impacts of the proposal on reserve maintenance and use of the reserve and the impact of changed conditions and public perception on Council Natural Reserves Rangers and other operations personnel.

Consultation materials

Community pop-ups

Frankston City Council ran two public pop-ups at Witternberg reserve and the local Roundabout Cafe to consult the Frankston community on the proposal, and to reach community members who are not active online, or may not have received promotional materials. To help inform the community, a large poster was created to support in-person consultation activities. The poster was displayed at community consultation events as conversation starters.

The poster provided background information on the proposal and clearly presented the proposed access options to allow people to select their preferred option.

People were encouraged to 'vote' for an option by putting stickers on a separate poster as well as to provide feedback via post it notes, on line using iPads or to begin conversations with the Engagement Team to share their feedback.

These posters have been provided in Appendix A.

Engage Frankston and Online Survey

As the concept of native vegetation offsetting can be difficult to grasp, Council went to considerable lengths on its online platform 'Engage Frankston' to explain how the native vegetation offset system works in Victoria and the potential benefits to Council of being able to provide offsets locally instead of outside the municipality.

Of critical importance in this explanation was the need to restrict access in the first place. It was clearly articulated that the only reason Council proposed fencing some of the tracks was because this is a mandatory and non-negotiable requirement of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) in order for Council to establish an offset site.

The key engagement tool was an online survey asking participants to select their preferred access and fencing option or to select a 'no change' option. Additional optional feedback was sought from participants asking them to tell us their reasons for their preferred option and provide any further feedback or comments. Participants were also asked about their connection to the reserve and for basic demographic information to enable Council to understand whether a diverse and representative range of voices were being heard.

An online survey was created on Engage Frankston for the Frankston City and wider community to share their feedback online. The survey was open from 1-27 the August 2023. The questions were consistent with the community pop-up posters. The survey questions included:

- Respond to each of the 4 options below to let us know whether you prefer the 'no change' option, or 1 of the 3 proposed access paths (maps showing options were provided).
- What are your reasons for your preferred option?
- What is your connection to this project?
- How do you currently use/enjoy the Reserve?
- Do you have any further feedback about this proposal, or comments about Witternberg reserve?

Social Media

The project and engagement opportunity were promoted through a post on Council's Facebook page.

The post on August 3rd 2023 raised awareness about the proposal and community pop-up events. Facebook events were also made for each of the pop-ups.

The post was seen by 3,672 people, accounting for roughly 13 per cent of our audience. This is above the industry average benchmark of 5 per cent.

Media and newsletters

Community members were also informed about the project through an item in Frankston City E-news where a link was provided to more information including the dates of the community pop-ups.

The August edition of the newsletter was sent to 3,420 recipients. 1,935 of those recipients opened the newsletter, with 89 total link clicks for Witternberg Reserve.

The project was also included in Council's Mini Frankston City newsletters, with a recipient list of 600 residents, EnviroNews, and the Frankston Environmental Friends Network newsletter.

Print Material and QR Codes

The following printed material was used in the engagement:

- A Postcard inviting feedback was mailed to addresses located approximately 300 metres around the reserve.
- 58 letters inviting feedback were mailed to addresses immediately surrounding the reserve.
- The four local schools in the area were emailed a letter inviting feedback: St Augustine's Primary, Kingsley Park Primary, Bayside Christian College, and Mt Erin College.
- An email was sent to 58 recipients who took part in the Witternberg Reserve Masterplan community consultation process.
- Signage (corflute posters) were installed at all reserve entrances inviting feedback.

One QR code (linking to the Engage Frankston page) was used across all print collateral, including posters, postcards, emails and letters. This resulted in 119 scans.

Consultation outcomes



Community feedback

Overall, Frankston City Council received approximately 400 interactions with/responses from community members. This is broken down as follows:

- 302 people completed the online survey.
- Approximately 50 people provided feedback and input during the public pop-ups.
- Approximately 30 people were engaged during meetings and presentations.
- 7 people provided email responses to the Environmental Policy and Planning team.
- Multiple people sent emails to Councillors.

On line Survey Results

The purpose of this consultation was to gauge the community response to a proposal to fence and close off some tracks within the reserve in order to gain the benefit of a local native vegetation offset site.

The key quantitative measure of community response to the proposal was the on-line survey. Respondents who attended the pop-ups or submitted contributions by email were also encouraged to complete the survey.

The results of the online survey are detailed in Appendix B Survey Results Summary, and summarised below:

- The survey revealed a clear preference for no change to the access with 243 people, of the 302 respondents, (80.4%) preferring the no change option (compared to 18 for option 1, 7 for option 2, 33 for option 3).
- The majority of survey respondents reported they lived near Witternberg Reserve (77%) and/or visited to the reserve (71%).
- Demographically the survey drew a diversity of participants, particularly amongst age groups and reasons for interest in the project.
- When asked how they use the reserve, the most frequent responses were: enjoying nature (81 % of responses), walking (90%) and dog walking (59%).
- About 30% of respondents reported they had an interest in biodiversity and ecological protection.

The 80.4% preference for no change to the Reserve is obviously a very clear result, and there is a strong expectation in comments that Council will listen to this feedback and make the decision not to proceed with the proposal.

When asked to give the reasons for their preferred option, respondents who preferred no change referred to:

- The benefits of being able to use the whole reserve to enjoy nature and exercise and the perception that the fenced options were restricting the use of their local reserve.
- The importance of the bushland as a local space for both nature appreciation and provision of mental health benefits. Participants expressed concern that any changes to access would limit these opportunities so close to their homes. There were several references to the value of being able to walk freely in the reserve during covid lockdowns.

The survey asked for further feedback or comments (an optional response) and 139 (46%) participants responded. The sentiment in the comments was largely negative with many people:

- Expressing the view that Council would be 'taking away their reserve' if the proposal was to proceed.
- Being sceptical of the conservation benefits that would be accrued by establishing the offset site and believed there would be no community benefit for the loss of access to their local bushland reserve.
- Commenting that access to nature promoted conservation of nature and that restricting access to their local reserve would further separate the community from getting close to nature and supporting biodiversity conservation.
- Questioning the implications of additional internal fencing for bushfire protection and suppression.
- Supporting improvements to the ecological condition, as well as tracks and facilities
 of the reserve, but not at the expense of public access to the bushland.

The following examples typify the majority of negative community sentiment expressed in participant's responses when asked to provide further feedback:

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"The reserve has been here forever. Please leave it in its current state. It is enjoyed by so many in the community."

"This is a fantastic area for locals to enjoy that compliments roundabout cafe and the east link track - it's away from traffic and road users, and currently poses no threat to the biodiversity as it stands now." (respondent voted for no change).

"It is a wonderful calming space & to alter its access for all to enjoy would be very upsetting."

"I think it would be a real shame for our community to lose the access to this bush walk. A lot of people use it as a daily connection with nature. Lots of people with small children and dogs and elderly people. Most are very respectful. It is really lovely to have a short and manageable bush walk in our local area where people can feel connected to nature and free to amble a little. I really like being able to choose from the different paths, even if they are short. Suits me perfectly at the moment. Please don't take it away or reduce our access to it, it is an asset to us here at Lakewood."

"I strongly believe this proposal is not in the best interests of the community and would have no, or at best, minimal positive impact on the environment."

"This is just a way to weasel out of paying for offset credits, by taking away a local area that already has wide biodiversity, is loved in the community and a central part of the green spaces that enhance mental and physical health. Turning this into a sectioned off dystopian area of fences constricting the public from enjoying the park is wrong and would stifle public engagement with native wild life and potentially damage the health of the community."

"Access to the full range of vegetation, birds and animals present without limitation is important to understand and appreciate this valuable reserve. Locking locals out on the majority of the reserve serves no value to the local community who are the ones most affected by this decision. Closing off existing access tracks would also make fire prevention and fire suppression activities more challenging and potentially increase the fire risk. I have had more than 30 years as a professional firefighter with CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria so feel qualified to comment regarding fire safety."

Community pop-ups

Frankston City Council ran two public pop-ups to reach community members who are not active online, or may not have received promotional materials about the engagement.

Community Pop Up	Date	Reach
Witternberg Reserve playground (including outreach to Robinsons Park)	Saturday 5 August 11am – 1pm	30
Roundabout Cafe	Thursday 17 August 10am- 12.30pm	20

Sentiment observed at the two pop-ups were largely negative, with the majority of participants preferring no change.



Approximately 60% of participants at the pop ups had already completed the online survey, so a second survey was not completed with these participants, and discussions held instead

with Council staff and Councillor Brad Hill. Participants who had not already completed a survey were encouraged to fill it out with Council staff on the spot using iPads, or if they had limited time, a sticker was added to the poster on their preferred option, and post it notes added to reflect their feedback.

Social media

The Facebook post was seen by 3,672 people, accounting for approximately 13 per cent of the total audience reached during the engagement and well above the industry average benchmark for community engagement social media posts of 5 per cent.

Commentary on social media was largely negative, with the post shared to the Lakewood Locals Facebook group where considerable interest was generated. Examples are provided in Appendix A Communications Summary Report.

Positive insights

While the community preference for no change (and hence no offset program) for the reserve was clear. There was also very strong support for the nature conservation values of the reserve and strong support for improvements to its biodiversity.

The consultation highlighted how much the local community values this bushland reserve not only as a peaceful area for passive recreation but also for its flora and fauna diversity and the opportunity it provides to be in nature.

The need to continue to manage and enhance that diversity was highlighted in many responses.

The community also responded positively to the opportunity to inform Council's decision on this, and strongly felt that their sentiment should be what influences Council's decision.

Opportunities for improvement

Feedback was received from the community that the posters and postcards distributed to promote the engagement did not clearly identify the four options. While survey results

indicate that the fourth ('no change') option was preferred by 80.4% of respondents, there was a sense from the community that the promotional material emphasised the offset options over option 4. This is valuable feedback from the community that Council will take on board when designing promotional materials.

Feedback was also received from the community that they were not as informed as they would have like to have been about the project. Council is satisfied with the number of visits to the page, and the reach that was achieved with the use of QR codes, social media, emails and newsletters, and believe that the results do reflect the community diversity and sentiment. However, we will continue to make improvements in our communications and promotion of engagements to ensure we achieve the largest reach possible.

Stakeholder feedback

In addition to the local community, key stakeholders likely to have an interest in the proposal were identified as:

- Frankston Baseball Club which utilises Robinsons Park extensively for games and training
- Frankston Environmental Friends Network (FEFN) the local peak body for biodiversity conservation organisations in Frankston with an interest in the conservation of native vegetation and biodiversity throughout the municipality
- The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC), the Traditional Custodians of the area in which the reserve occurs.

Council officers gave presentations on the proposal and invited feedback at meetings of FEFN, the Frankston Baseball Club and at an internal Council officer meeting attended by representatives of the BLCAC. Officers answered questions at the sessions and encouraged individual members or Friends' groups to participate in the on-line survey or provide submissions to Council.

The Baseball Club did not express any particular concern with the proposed change to access but noted that the club loses multiple baseballs into the bushland area adjacent to Robinsons Road and suggested that netting would solve this problem. If the baseball diamond was netted the club did not have any objections to the proposal.

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There were no responses that could be identified as from FEFN members or Traditional Owners.

Council feedback

Consultation on the proposal was undertaken with Council's Environmental Policy and Planning, Urban Design (City Futures), Open Space (Capital Works Delivery) and Parks and Vegetation (Operations) Units.

It was noted in these discussions that the available offset amount at Witternberg Reserve (1.048 General Habitat Units) is small when compared with the offset schemes of other municipalities.

An analysis undertaken by Council officers in 2020 found that only two of Council's natural reserves, Witternberg Reserve and Studio Park, were suitable as native vegetation offsets, based on their size, vegetation quality, position in the landscape, tenure and surrounding land use. As noted in Council Report 2023/CM 2 (February 20th 2023) Studio Park is subject to a Restrictive Covenant and the intention to use Studio Park for an offset site is fundamentally inconsistent with the existing restrictive covenant. Therefore Witternberg Reserve is the only feasible offset site available within the municipality.

Once the offset amount within Witternberg reserve is expended, it is unlikely that there will be any other Council-owned land available within Frankston that meets the criteria to be eligible as a native vegetation offset. However, the Reserve would be required to continue to be fenced and managed according to DEECA standards in perpetuity.

Capital Works provided advice on the likely timelines for delivery of Shared Use Paths that would link Witternberg Reserve and Robinsons Park with the Peninsula Link Trail under the Witternberg Masterplan.

Council's Parks and Vegetation Unit, which manages Witternberg Bushland Reserve, has particularly emphasised the need for Council to weigh the potential community impact against the overall benefit of generating this amount of offset credits. For example, Council will need to consider the offset site establishment costs (site assessment, reporting, surveyor site plans and DEECA fees and fencing) and ongoing management (including fence

maintenance) and annual monitoring costs, given the finite value of the offsets generated at Witternberg Reserve (estimated to be \$141,480).

Council's Parks and Vegetation Unit also commented on the on-going management implications of establishing the reserve as an offset site including:

- The need to consider the significant capital cost and ongoing maintenance cost of separating public access from nature by a fence, which also may affect the community's peaceful immersive experience.
- Fire management decisions would be made by DEECA rather than Council, which could affect Council's capacity for ecological burning.
- Management KPI's for rapid woody weed removal under the required Offset Management Plan has potential to contribute to an influx in ground flora weeds and resulting loss of indigenous ground flora.
- 'Wildlife friendly fencing' carries a risk it may be vandalised. DEECA will have the authority to require Council to install a more restrictive fence if the proposed fencing does not adequately restrict dogs and people.

Evaluation



The Engagement Plan for this consultation included several measures of success related to the engagement objectives.

The success measures met and the objectives they relate to are outlined below:

Objective	Success Measure
Seek feedback on the establishment of the site as an Offset, including feedback on community preference for Council to instead not change access to the reserve and instead pay for offset sites in other Council areas.	Achieved: Community feedback on the proposal was clear and able to directly inform Council's decision.
Understand the community's support for the proposal, given a level of access restriction to the reserve is required in order for it to proceed	Achieved: Community feedback on the proposal was clear and able to directly inform Council's decision. Community comments also communicated their understanding of the effect of the proposal. There was also higher than average engagement on the page, with people viewing the page for long enough to read the information.
Understand the community's preference for the location of the pathway fencing (within budget and must enclose offset areas)	Achieved: Option 3 (the largest area of path) was the second most preferred option, but it was clear that over 80% of participants preferred no change to current pathways.
Engage through cost-efficient and timely methods	Achieved: High participation rates, and diverse voices, were reached through efficient means of engagement, via online Engage Frankston tools, and 2 community pop ups.
Meet legislative and policy requirements for community engagement.	Achieved: Engagement Principles met throughout the engagement, and the engagement influenced Council's decision.

Conclusion

This engagement achieved a strong participation rate of 302 contributions, with a diversity of voices heard in the methods of engagement used.

Engagement outcomes clearly showed that restricting access to the reserve has been perceived negatively by the community.

Recommendations and next steps

Given the strong and clear community feedback received, recommendations for a decision have been provided in a timely manner to Council, to directly inform a decision not to proceed with the proposal.

Council officer's recommendations for the Council meeting on 11 September 2023 are as for Council to:

- Note that Community Engagement was undertaken in relation to the proposed native vegetation offsite and Witternberg Bushland Reserve between 1 August and 27 August 2023 and during this engagement:
 - a. 913 people visited the engage Frankston site
 - b. 302 people completed the survey, and of these 243 (80.4%) prefer the no change option (compared to 18 for option 1, 7 for option 2, 33 for option 3).
- Resolve that Officers cease the investigation into a native offset site at Wittenberg reserve due to the strong community sentiment for the no change option as detailed in point 3.
- 3. Notes that an Engagement Report on the proposed Native Vegetation Offset Site would be provided on the Engage Frankston website; and.
- 4. Notes that no further report will be presented to Council on consultation outcomes of native offset site at Wittenberg reserve

Following Council's decision, this Engagement Report will be published on Engage Frankston, and interested community members will be notified.

Appendices

Appendix A Witternberg Communications Wrap Up

Appendix B Witternberg Offset Survey Results Summary

Appendix A



Witternberg Reserve communications support

Engagement period: 1 August to 27 August

Facebook

Introductory post: 3 August

"Frankston City Council is exploring options to establish sections of Witternberg Bushland Reserve as a Native Vegetation Offset Site..."

Analysis

We posted once on Facebook for the Witternberg Reserve project. It was important to let the community know about the project, however, we didn't want more than one two-way communication method given the negative feedback. The post was seen by 3,672 people, accounting for roughly 13 per cent of our audience. This is above the industry average benchmark of 5 per cent. Commentary was largely negative, with our post shared to the Lakewood Locals Facebook group (see screen shots below).

Link:

https://www.facebook.com/FrankstonCityCouncil/posts/pfbid02yx4C6sB2mAgRLdBqYkkYSgzHR9SJY4BT5jdSLznZjBNDjKLZtbfseNUEusfYGSUfl

Post visual:



** Frankston City Council is exploring options to establish sections of Witternberg Bushland Reserve as a Native Vegetation Offset Site.

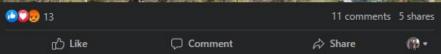
But what is an offset site? 🧸

- The When Council removes trees or other natural assets to create new infrastructure, they must purchase "offset credits" to make up for biodiversity losses to the environment.
- * Normally, Council buys credits from another place that is protecting nature. Council would like to instead create their own offset site, so funds and resources can be used within our own bushland areas to improve our natural values.
- The offset site would restrict parts of the reserve to public access, however, fenced walking trails will still be available throughout the reserve and pedestrian and dog walking access through to Robinson's Park would remain.
- We invite you to complete our online survey to choose a path through the reserve. There is also an option to oppose the offset reserve all together.
- Your input is important to us, so please share your thoughts before the consultation closes on 5pm Sunday, 27 August, 2023. Visit Engage Frankston to have your say: https://engage.frankston.vic.gov.au/witternberg-bushland...

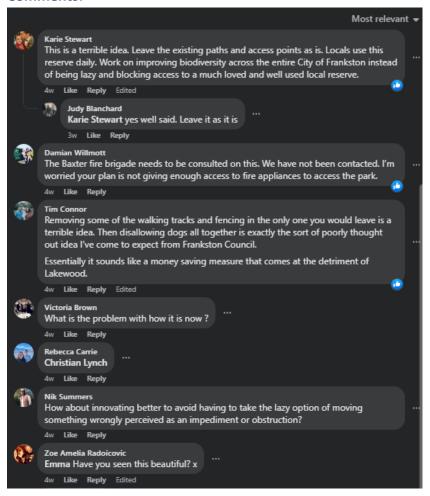
Want to see us in person? You can visit us at one of our pop-up events, listed below:

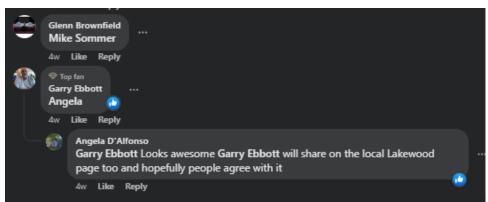
- Saturday 5 August 11am 1pm, Witternberg Reserve Playground.
- Thursday 17 August 10am 12.30pm, Roundabout Cafe, 1/19 Shaxton Cir.
 See you there!



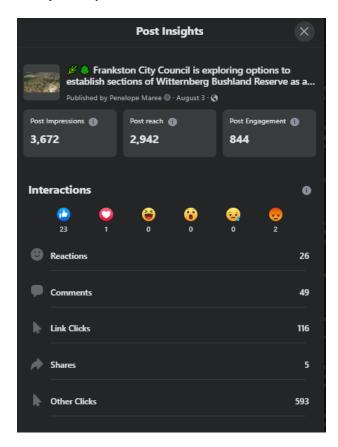


Comments:





Analytics report:



Commentary on Lakewood Locals closed Facebook group

Analysis: There are 14 posts relating to the proposed offset site at Witternberg Reserve. Half of these are from one resident. Community sentiment is strongly against the offset project, with some complaints about Council's process. There are approximately 150 comments across these 14 posts.

E-News

The August edition of the newsletter was sent to 3,420 recipients. 1,935 of those recipients opened the newsletter, with 89 total link clicks for Witternberg Reserve.

Printed material

One QR code was used across all print collateral, including posters, postcards and letters. This resulted in 119 scans.

Posters



What is a native vegetation offset site?

When Council removes trees or other natural assets to create new infrastructure, they have to purchase "offset credits" to make up for losses to the environment.

Normally, Councils buy credits from another place that is protecting nature. Instead, Frankston City Council wants to create their own nature protection site instead of buying credits from somewhere else. The establishment of an offset site at Witternberg Bushland Reserve requires fencing off the bushland which will be out of bounds to the public.

Have your say

Visitors will still be able to access and enjoy the natural beauty of the reserve via a fenced access path. The remaining tracks will be closed to public access.

Nathalie Nunn, Coordinator Environmental Policy and Planning Email info@frankston.vic.gov.au Phone 1300 322 322



Witternberg Bushland Reserve & Robinsons Park

Proposed Native Vegetation Offset Sites

Council is proposing to establish Witternberg Bushland Reserve as a Native Vegetation Offset Site. An offset site means the Bushland Reserve would be protected and compensates for the loss in blodiversity. This would result in additional funding for conservation works within the reserve to enhance is biodiversity values.

However, If the Reserve is established as a Native Vegetation Offset Site, public access to the bushland would be restricted to designated tracks into the bushland. Some existing tracks would be closed and the remaining tracks would be fenced allowing access through the reserve but with the bushland areas out of bounds to the public.

FRANKSTON CITY COUNCIL WANTS YOUR FEEDBACK

We are asking our community to guide whether the reserve should become a Native Vegetation Offset Site and how much of the network of access tracks within the reserve should be open to allow public access through the reserve.

To view these plans online please visit:

Please send your e-mail submission b Urbandesign@frankston.vic.gov.au

Or

Send your written letter or submission to: Witternberg Reserve – Community Consultation Frankston Planning and Environment Department PO Box 499 FRANKSTON, VIC. 3199

Read more about what this would mean and share your feedback on the website accessible by the QR code by Xpm XX XXX 2023

QR CODE



PROPOSED SOUTHERN OFFSET ZONE





PROPOSED NORTHERN OFFSET ZONE

PATH OPTION 1 - 321 METRES LONG



PATH OPTION 2 - 449 METRES LONG



LEGEND

Existing "bushland track"

Existing shared concrete path

× Removed public access points

Existing & future airlock gates
Existing & proposed fencing to exclude human access

Proposed public access

No public access to Bushland

Informal exercise/circuit path

Proposed peninsula link connection paths

ABOUT OFFSET SITES :

- The purpose of native vegetation offsets is to compensate for the loss of biodiversity values when native vegetation is removed.
- Council often needs to remove small amounts of native vegetation to provide community infrastructure such as roads, shared paths and sporting facilities.
- When Council has a permit to remove native vegetation for a project, it must purchase 'offset credits' from Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action.
- Council always endeavours to minimise native vegetation loss and mitigates it with replanting, installing nesting boxes and habitat logs.
- Currently credits must be purchased from outside the City within the Westernport, Port Phillip catchment area as no offset offset oviet in Empleton City.
- Having a local offset site will enable money from Council's legally required offset purchases to flow back to our municipality to fund biodiversity enhancement.



Postcard



Proposed native vegetation offset site

Council are proposing to create a native vegetation offset site at Witternberg Reserve, to maintain and enhance biodiversity within the municipality.

The establishment of an offset site at Witternberg Bushland Reserve requires fencing off some sections of bushland. Visitors will still be able to access and enjoy the natural beauty of the reserve.

Visit engage.frankston.vic.gov.au/witternberg-bushlandreserve by 27 August to have your say on one of three alternate options for fenced walking track through sections of the reserve, or vote for no offset project.

Pathway options



Path option 1 — 321 metres long



Path option 2 — 449 metres long



Scan the QR code to have your say



Email: Environmental.PolicyandPlanning@ frankston.vic.gov.au Phone 1300 322 322

Letters/Email

58 letters were sent to adjoining residents on 3 August 2023.

An email was sent to 58 recipients who took part in the Witternberg Reserve Masterplan community consultation process.

4 schools were emailed a letter on 15 August 2023. These include St Augustine's Primary, Kingsley Park Primary, Bayside Christian College, and Mt Erin College.

Below is an example of a letter (contents remained largely the same but altered slightly depending on audience).



Frankston City Council

Reference: A4954397 Enquiries: Nathalie Nunn Telephone: 1300 322 322

Owner/Occupier 4 Landsdowne Court FRANKSTON VIC 3199

1st August 2023

RE: Proposed Native Vegetation offset site at Witternberg Bushland Reserve

Frankston City Council is proposing to establish a Native Vegetation Offset Site at Witternberg Bushland Reserve and is asking for community input into this proposal.

what is a failther weighted or the loss of blodiversity caused when native vegetation is removed from other sites. It helps balance out the environmental impact of activities like building infrastructure for example a new path, building or recreation area.

Why is Council proposing to create an offset site?

While Council always aims to minimise native vegetation loss, and mitigates it with replanting, installing habitat logs, it is required to purchase "offset credits" when vegetation is removed. Normally, Council buys credits from other municipalities that have already created offset sites. Instead, Council is row proposing to create its own offset site, to maintain and enhance blodiversity within Frankston City.

wmy wittermore; business exerver. Council conducted a detailed review of all local natural reserves to find possible offset sites. The review identified that out of all the Council-owned natural reserves, Witternberg Reserve is the only one to satisfy the State Government rules to become an offset site.

Witternberg is one of our largest reserves supporting an important stand of remnant indigenous woodland and wildlife habitat.

Changes to access to Witternberg Bushland Reserve
If Council proceeds with the offset proposal it will mean changes to the way Witternberg Bushland Reserve is accessed by the public. The vegetation within the reserve would be fenced off and some tracks would be closed off.

You will still be able to visit, enjoy and walk from the Reserve's playground through to Robinsons Park. However, public access would be permanently restricted to designated tracks into the bushland and all bushland areas would be fenced off and out of bounds to the public.

Fencing would be "Wildlife friendly" farm style fencing with gaps that allow native animals to move through or under a fence. If the project proceeds fencing is likely to commence towards the end of the 23/24 financial year.

Council needs your input
We're asking whether you want Witternberg Bushland Reserve to become a Native Vegetation
Offset Site, with the consequent changes to public access, and if so, which path option you
prefer.

What up the door of the Wist Engage Frankston or scan the QR code below to share your feedback on options for how Witternberg Bushland Reserve could be established as a Native Vegetation Offset Site or vote not to establish an offset at Witternberg and not to change the public access arrangements by midnight Sunday 27 August 2023.

Where can I learn more?

where can Hearn more:
All project details are available on Engage Frankston (engage.frankston.vic.gov.au/witternberg-bushland-reserve) or scan the QR code below). You can also visit the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action website to find out more about the Victorian Government Native Vegetation Offset program: www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/native-vegetation-removal-regulations/offsets-for-the-removal-of-native-vegetation.

Should you have any queries please contact Nathalie Nunn or David Fairbridge via phone on 1300 322 322, or email: Environmental.PolicyandPlanning@frankston.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Nathalie Nura

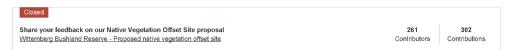
Coordinator Environmental Policy and Planning



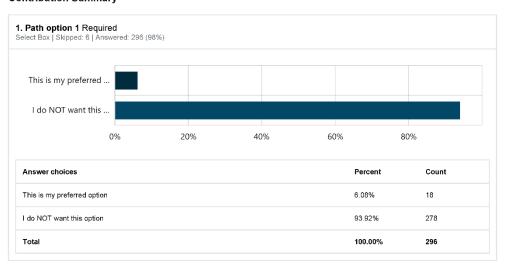
engage.frankston.vic.gov.au/witternberg-bushland-reserve

Appendix B

Engage Frankston! Report Type: Form Results Summary Date Range: 31-07-2023 - 28-08-2023 Exported: 28-08-2023 16:35:49



Contribution Summary



2. Path option 2 Required Select Box | Skipped: 6 | Answered: 296 (98%) This is my preferred ... I do NOT want this ... 0% 20% 60% 40% 80% Answer choices Percent Count 2.36% 7 This is my preferred option I do NOT want this option 97.64% 289 100.00% 296



4. No change Required Select Box | Skipped: 6 | Answered: 296 (98%) This is my preferred ... I do NOT want this ... 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% Answer choices Percent Count This is my preferred option 82.09% 243 I do NOT want this option 17.91% 53 100.00% 296



The money should be spent to create OFF ROAD PARKING for the new Witternberg Reserve playground, given too many young children/toddlers entering and exiting cars parked on the roadside, along with dogs and parents loading the cars, incredibly dangerous!! I've witnessed too many unsafe situations and possibility of fatalities whilst driving through this area on a daily basis. All locals have major concerns with this unsafe roadside parking! Please finish this Reserve properly. Also I don't feel the proposed native vegetation offset site will make any difference and vandals will still access this area. Thank you for allowing my thoughts and opinion.

Contribution 19 of 19 | 26 August 2023

I think having an offset site for Frankston city is a great idea and prefer path option one as this maximizes offset potential, with increased biodiversity and ecological values. A win for the environment and for Frankston City.

Contribution 18 of 19 | 25 August 2023

Changing the park access will completely kill off members who use it. All access points are necessary for people who use it including children. It'll be a complete waste of resources to change it as you'll destroy the functionality of the park for many people who will go elsewhere.

Contribution 17 of 19 | 23 August 2023

I meet with three other ladies and we walk in the morning, we don't have dogs any more but enjoy Patting the ones there. We like that the community uses this reserve. We like to chat to the people who walk their dogs and Mothers on the way to the playgrounds. We love the nature. Contribution 16 of 19 | 23 August 2023

Max convervation and makes a nice large loop to walk once new access paths created to access pen link trail. Contribution 15 of 19 | 19 August 2023

This whole idea is completely ridiculous when considering the offset benefits gained which are marginal at best when compared with loss of resident enjoyment of natural remnant vegetation that is well connected both internally and externally to Robinsons Park and surrounding residential areas. The site will provide a negligible carbon offset as the site is already substantially covered by vegetation. Council should be seeking to identify other council owned land that is not vegetated so that offsets achieve the maximum possible carbon benefit.

Contribution 14 of 19 | 18 August 2023

There are very few places around Lakewood and in Frankston that are not residential streets where my family and I can walk with our dogs. We have lived in Lakewood for 12 yrs and love Wittenberg bush land as it is an area that we can walk to from home and enjoy together as a family. There are so many places we can't explore as a family - Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, Frankston Reservoir, Bunarong Park, to name a few

Contribution 13 of 19 | 17 August 2023



It's a wonderful site to walk around, not through! To shut off current paths would be such a shame! I had hoped my kids could grow up waking and riding their bikes through here!

Contribution 12 of 19 | 17 August 2023

I don't like the loss of use from the suggested changes. I can appreciate the idea to use land within council areas, but feel like the community is getting shortchanged by the options to limit usage. Also - offsetting is kinda bunk Contribution 11 of 19 | 17 August 2023

This reserve saved a lot if us during lockdown - walking, the kids, enjoying the area. Do t take this space away from our neighborhood for our use.

Contribution 10 of 19 | 17 August 2023

The area is largely used by local residents to walk around. This is the only option which allows this. While I strongly support any efforts to improve our footprint and encourage biodiversity there needs to be a compromise. Council should consider an option which allows use of residents to walk around in a loop while creating a sustainable ecosystem

Contribution 9 of 19 | 17 August 2023

I really like being able to walk through the bush as a loop that connects to the park, or choose to keep it as a bush walk loop. I think the options are great. I think it would be a real shame to reduce the walks within the bush area.

Contribution 8 of 19 | 15 August 2023

We use all of the current walking paths within Wittenberg reserve regularly and think it is an asset to the neighborhood, and something I find important for my own physical and mental health.

Contribution 7 of 19 | 15 August 2023

Public access to green space is necessary for health and wellbeing. People of all ages benefit from close proximity to nature. Develop new sites for offsets rather than reducing people's access to this lovely little park or other parks in the city.

Contribution 6 of 19 | 14 August 2023

I believe the council should get more creative and ADD rather than restrict an existing area to be able to tick and offset box. Contribution 5 of 19 | 14 August 2023

It has a longer walking track than option 1 but limits the ability to access a lot of the reserve which is good. It helps to maximise the offset opportunity.

Contribution 4 of 19 | 14 August 2023

Please, please, please leave this reserve as it is. I don't have an issue about revegetating, but I do have a big problem with fencing it in.I Do NOT want fences I Do NOT want tracks to be blocked off. I just can't understand why the need for fences. Frankston Council must have come into some unexpected money!!! You haven't delivered the promised indented car parks as was on the first phase of playground upgrade. I was told you ran out of money!!! Now all of a sudden this offset site comes up where's the money coming from for this. Rate payers money!!! Contribution 3 of 19 | 13 August 2023

The parkland is a welcome natural bushland area adjoining suburbia. I would like to see maximum access for residents to continue to enjoy this



area - as I do on regular walks through the reserve. I have no issue with there being set pathways and fencing, to preserve the area, but restricting access to Robinsons Park and or the playground is in my opinion a backward step. I fully support the 2 pathways connecting Peninsula Link.

Contribution 2 of 19 | 13 August 2023

It would be good to have a vegetation offset but still have some good walking tracks path option 3 provides the best of both worlds. Contribution 1 of 19 | 13 August 2023

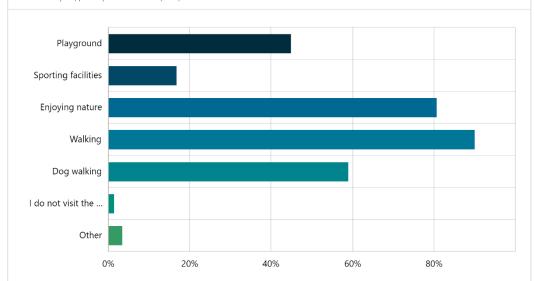


6. What is your connection to this project? Required Multi Choice | Skipped: 0 | Answered: 302 (100%) My home/property ... I live near ... I visit Witternberg ... I am interested in ... Other 0% 20% 40% 60%

Answer choices	Percent	Count
My home/property shares a fence with Witternberg Reserve	5.96%	18
l live near Witternberg Reserve	76.82%	232
l visit Witternberg Reserve	70.53%	213
I am interested in biodiversity and ecological protection	28.81%	87
Other	4.30%	13



7. How do you currently use/enjoy the Reserve? Required Multi Choice | Skipped: 3 | Answered: 299 (99%)



Answer choices	Percent	Count
Playground	44.82%	134
Sporting facilities	16.72%	50
Enjoying nature	80.60%	241
Walking	89.97%	269
Dog walking	58.86%	176
I do not visit the Reserve	1.34%	4
Other	3.34%	10

8. Do you have any further feedback about this proposal, or comments about Witternberg reserve?

Long Text | Skipped: 163 | Answered: 139 (46%

Sentiment



Negative Neutral 1% (2) 44% (61)

Unclassified 33% (46)

Tags

No tag data

Featured Contributions

As above- Please please please make safe off road parking available for parents and children to attend this reserve. It's incredibly dangerous as it is with cars parked on both sides of the roadway and children running everywhere Contribution 33 of 33 | 26 August 2023

I agree the reserve needs care and was my family participated with tree planting the NE area. However a reduction in access removed a wonderful walking area circuit. Furthermore, the bushland circuit becomes ann alternative when the Softball ovals are saturated after rains, are being used for sports or is simply too weather exposed.

Contribution 32 of 33 | 26 August 2023

I don't have a Dogs, but I like chatting to the people who do Having the rubbish bins emptied more often near the toilets would help, and when the sports people cleanup the sports shack telling them not to put the rubbish into the public rubbish bins would be good because otherwise everyone's paper cups and things go everywhere. A lot of people need to use those toilets during the day and have coffee cups and things to put into the bins so an extra bin or two near the toilets would be good.

Contribution 31 of 33 | 23 August 2023

I don't understand why you would want people to use nature less. There are not many places left where I can walk with my grandchildren and parked right near there and it doesn't matter if I'm going with my friends are grandchildren who have dogs are don't have dogs, I can still enjoy a nice walk through nature.

Contribution 30 of 33 | 22 August 2023

Don't do it. Leave it as it is. I also feel not enough public opinion had been allowed to have their voice in this. One small poster that doesn't describe your intentions for this proposal is unjust. Even this feedback survey was difficult to find on the website. I don't believe you are getting true feedback in this way and hearing the voices of the community. Contribution 29 of 33 | 17 August 2023

Council needs to keep existing green wedge areas and bushlands as they are, and consider other areas that can been planted out and made into conservation areas, rather than taking away from what is already existing. Contribution 28 of 33 \mid 17 August 2023

I love the initiative. The walking and bushland around the Lakewood area are my favourite things about the area. I'm totally on board with anything that works to thoughtfully preserve and improve that. Regardless of the option chosen, it would be good if the paths could be improved they're frequently flooded, muddy or uneven, especially in winter.

Contribution 27 of 33 | 17 August 2023



If Options 1 and 3 could be merged, so that a loop is still available, that would be the best option. Contribution 26 of $33 \mid 17$ August 2023

It's a unusually good wooded reserve for a suburban area. Birds like collared sparrowhawks and common bronzewing are good species to find in a reserve of this type. I think allowing public use on a reason set of tracks means more people care enough about the area to protect and maintain it. I would favour increased native plantings in other area like nature strips.

Contribution 25 of 33 | 17 August 2023

Attended aboriginal talk at reserve that was really helpful, should do again. Update on vegetation that is being protected Contribution 24 of 33 | 17 August 2023

I strongly believe this proposal is not in the best interests of the community and would have no, or at best, minimal positive impact on the environment.

Contribution 23 of 33 | 13 August 2023

By closing this off will create a higher fire risk. There is no information on the fire management. No consultation with local fire service Contribution 22 of 33 | 9 August 2023

My rates pay for your council, if you don't listen to your voters you won't be there after the next election. You my think people will forget and not take notice but you are very wrong. We are here and we will remember if you do not listen to our needs.

Contribution 21 of 33 | 9 August 2023

I think this small bushland area is enjoyed by a lot of local people. We enjoy being able to walk to this area and experience nature. Without it we would have to get into a car and drive elsewhere which has another impact on the environment.

Contribution 20 of 33 | 8 August 2023

I'm assuming it needs to be a section of unbroken land with no pedestrian access but both paths need to be retained with the 3 points of access. If the paths were fenced in inside the reserve then I would be ok with that.

Contribution 19 of 33 | 7 August 2023

I think it is a wonderful opportunity to protect our native wildlife and their habitat. I know it's a popular walking and dog walking area but we also have Robinson's Park nearby as well as the lake in Shaxton Circle so we're spoiled for choice for walking and dog walking options. I am in the process of creating a dry creek bed in my back yard surrounded by indigenous plants bought from the Frankston Council's wonderful Indigenous nursery to encourage native birds into my garden as well as frogs and bees. I support you completely in this project - well done!

Contribution 18 of 33 | 7 August 2023

Path Option 2 will be extremely unfavourable by the community that uses Robinson's Reserve. Blocking off access to the entrance to the duck pond will cause a lot of issues for local dog walkers. Option 3 seems to be the most suitable.

Contribution 17 of 33 | 7 August 2023

Please continue to expand the vegetation at Wittenberg Reserve. I have enjoyed watching the area be rejuvenated and expanded. However, don't restrict the public's access to the walking tracks. People enjoy walking there daily. Look for ways to plant more trees and improve biodiversity across the entire city of Frankston. Don't block public access to a well utilised area.



Contribution 16 of 33 | 6 August 2023

The ability to walk in a small patch of nature was an absolute saving grace to me, having moved from the country just prior to lockdowns. I love observing the birdlife, and fauna in different seasons. I would be happy to see it better protected from dogs, and suggest that if the fencing were taller with a floppy top and finer grade you might protect it more from foxes and rabbits and other pest species. Contribution 15 of 33 | 6 August 2023

Build a carpark! Poor planning processes and lack of community consultation should not impact the local community. Ratepayers want their money spent wisely.
Contribution 14 of 33 | 6 August 2023

The proposal seems mainly about trying to secure more funding. Contribution 13 of 33 | 6 August 2023

I love that work has gone into planting more vegetation in the reserve- I am more than happy for more trees and plants to be around, but the access to the walking tracks that are currently available is really important to us. Contribution 12 of 33 | 6 August 2023

My hope is that this input process is not a farce, that community feedback is genuinely considered and that council have not already made a decision on this. Do not take this away from our community. There are many other places that can be considered for the offset e.g parts of Frankston reservoir or Langwarrin flora and Fauna, much bigger spaces, that can be fenced off from human activity. Contribution 11 of 33 | 5 August 2023

Possums seem to be absolutely smashing the trees within this reserve. I noticed resulting a number of the Euc's have been defoliated. Contribution 10 of 33 | 5 August 2023

Waste of money for little result. Nobody wants this. Find somewhere else. And put forward a decent argument that is transparent for all

Contribution 9 of 33 | 4 August 2023

Given the community this reserve sits, while I support biodiversity, the priority is how the community can enjoy the space. I would also want to understand fire management of the area if it is going to become more densely populated with trees. And what would be in place to protect families/homes and wildlife in bushfire season.

Contribution 8 of 33 | 4 August 2023

Such a great idea to have a local offset. Fully support this decision

Contribution 7 of 33 | 4 August 2023

Look at adding shade sails over the metal slides as they become too hot and unusable in the sun. Contribution 6 of 33 | 4 August 2023

Please leave our bush alone.



Contribution 5 of 33 | 3 August 2023

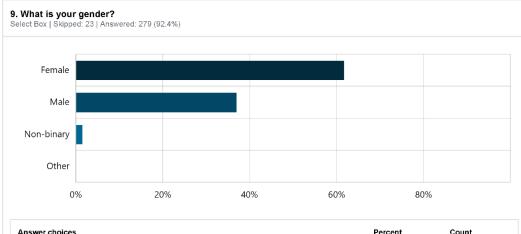
Please go ahead with it. No messing around- Do It. Thankyou. Contribution 4 of 33 | 3 August 2023

Ensure that the pathways to the freeway walking track is completed at the same time (or prior) to completion of the new pathway & closing off of the reservation Contribution 3 of 33 | 3 August 2023

This would be an big injustice to the community to fence off the natural walking tracks that have been there for years. Contribution 2 of 33 | 3 August 2023

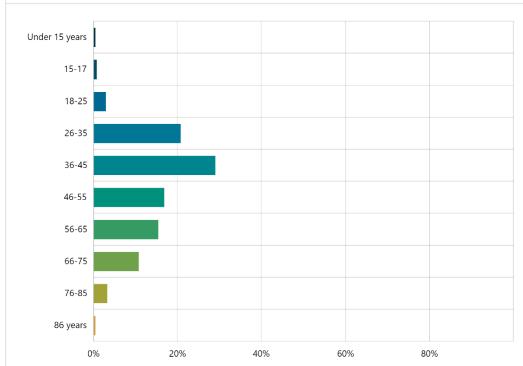
the proposals are great but something needs to be done about the parking. It is horrible along there on the weekend you can hardly drive through with cars parked on both sides of the road. It has become a very popular area with no parking(would suggest the swampy land be turned into off road parking and no standing signs be placed on the non park side as it is only a matter of time before a child is hit but a car. Contribution 1 of 33 | 3 August 2023





Answer choices	Percent	Count
Female	61.65%	172
Male	36.92%	103
Non-binary	1.43%	4
Other	0%	0
Total	100.00%	279

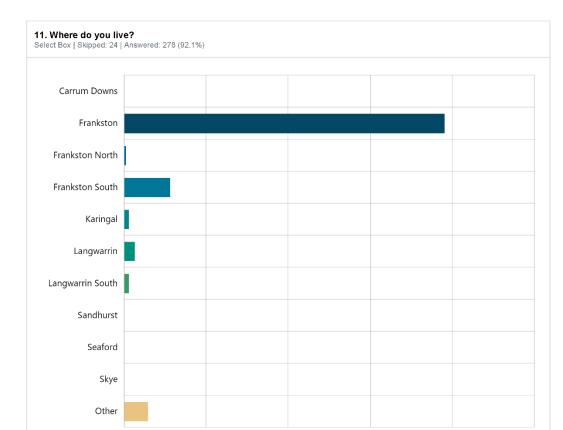




Answer choices	Percent	Count
Under 15 years	0.36%	1
15-17	0.71%	2
18-25	2.86%	8
26-35	20.71%	58
36-45	28.93%	81
46-55	16.79%	47
56-65	15.36%	43
66-75	10.71%	30
76-85	3.21%	9
86 years	0.36%	1

Total 100.00% 280





Answer choices	Percent	Count
Carrum Downs	0%	0
Frankston	78.06%	217
Frankston North	0.36%	1
Frankston South	11.15%	31
Karingal	1.08%	3
Langwarrin	2.52%	7
Langwarrin South	1.08%	3
Sandhurst	0%	0
Seaford	0%	0

40%

60%

80%



0%

20%

8	Skye	0%	0
(Other	5.76%	16
7	Total	100.00%	278

