

Wilsons Botantic Park Play Precinct Review

Community Engagement Summary
Report
2021

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2 Background

The City of Casey is undertaking a renewal of the Wilson Botanic Park Berwick Play Precinct, with the aim of creating a revitalised, accessible, and engaging play experience for the community. The project represents a key opportunity to strengthen the park's role as a destination for families, children, visitors and nature-lovers, while preserving the unique natural character that makes Wilson Botanic Park so valued.

To ensure the renewed play precinct reflects the needs and aspirations of local residents, Council commenced a community consultation program. This was the first step in a broader, staged design and delivery process scheduled to begin in the second half of the year (subject to funding). Community input gathered during this stage will form the foundation for the design brief and will directly inform the renewal and potential expansion of the playground.

The consultation invited visitors, families, carers, and park users to share their experiences, identify what works well, and highlight areas where the play space could be improved. Participants were encouraged to consider whether key features were missing, what they valued most in the existing space, and how the precinct could better support children of all ages, accessibility needs, and community use.

On-site engagement sessions were held on Thursday 8 April 2021 and Sunday 18 April 2021, complemented by an online survey that remained open until Friday 23 April 2021. These activities helped the project team gain a broad understanding of how people currently use the play precinct and how it could evolve to better support play, social connection, nature engagement, and family recreation.

2.1 Key findings

Community feedback highlights that the Wilson Botanic Park Play Precinct is highly valued for its natural timber design, peaceful garden setting, and variety of play opportunities, with many respondents appreciating the wooden equipment, multi-zone layout, and suitability for children of different ages. However, park users also identified several limitations, including a lack of shade, outdated or worn equipment, significant accessibility challenges due to the steep hill, and safety concerns relating to fencing, supervision, and drop-offs. When asked to rank future priorities, the community placed the greatest importance on adventure play, nature play, and accessible and sensory experiences, signalling a desire for a more inclusive and engaging precinct. Additional comments reinforced the need for more equipment for older children, improved shade and seating, enhanced safety and fencing, better parking and access, and a strong preference to retain the natural timber character while expanding play opportunities such as water play, climbing elements, and multi-area zones.

2.2 Next steps

Council officers will consider community feedback to inform future design of the play precinct. Further community consultation on the draft design will take place later.

3 Consultation findings

Question 1

Survey respondents were asked, what do you like about the play precinct?

Key themes from 168 responses were...

Natural Timber Design & Wooden Equipment - 92 mentions

- Timber equipment
- Natural materials
- Organic / rustic look
- Non-plastic equipment
- Fits with gardens
- Natural aesthetic & feel
- Wooden structures (slides, swings, frames)
- Not hot in summer
- “Back to basics” feel

Variety of Equipment / Multiple Zones - 48 mentions

- Two separate areas (younger + older kids)
- Many things to do
- Range of activities
- Good for different ages
- Multi-zone layout

Location & Surroundings - 41 mentions

- Beautiful gardens
- Views

- Scenery
- Set among trees
- Peaceful environment

Shade / Trees / Cool Areas – 33 mentions

- Shaded areas
- Tree shade
- Comfortable supervision spots

Good for All Ages - 25 mentions

- “Suitable for toddlers”
- “Great for all ages”
- “Good for bigger and little kids”

Convenience & Amenities - 20 mentions

Community mentioned liking amenities like nearby toilets, seating, picnic tables, close to entrance and close to café

Social / Family Friendly - 14 mentions

- Family gatherings
- Kids having fun
- Social play
- Meeting other parents

Space & Openness - 13 mentions

- Open grassy areas
- Room to run
- Spaciousness

Specific Favourite Features - 22 mentions

- Swings
- Slides
- Flying fox
- Tunnels
- Boat-shaped equipment

Safety (Positive Mentions) – 12 mentions

- Feels safe
- Easy supervision
- Not near roads
- Natural materials feel safer

Simplicity / Traditional Play - 16 mentions

- Back-to-basics
- Not over-designed
- Not “arty farty”

- Simple, traditional play style

Question 2

Survey respondents were asked, what do you dislike about the play precinct?

Key themes from 172 responses were...

Lack of Shade & Weather Protection — 34 mentions

- Lack of shade sails
- Too hot in summer
- Not enough tree shade
- Need shade over seating and play

Outdated / Worn / Small Equipment — 32 mentions

- Equipment is dated, tired, splintery
- Looks old
- Too small / cramped
- Needs an upgrade

Accessibility Issues (Hill, Steps, Distance) — 28 mentions

- Steep hill difficult for prams, elderly, disability
- Long walk from carpark
- Split-level layout difficult
- Hard for multi-child supervision

Safety Concerns — 25 mentions

- Dangerous fencing
- Steep drop-offs
- Wide gaps in bridges
- Hard to supervise across long layout
- Unsafe for toddlers

Not Enough Equipment / Limited Variety — 26 mentions

- Not enough activities
- Lack of adventure/obstacle play
- No water play
- Limited options for older children

Crowded / Busy / Not Enough Capacity — 20 mentions

- Overcrowded weekends
- Long waits for swings
- Not enough high-demand items
- Too many people for a small space

Seating, Amenities & Facilities Insufficient — 19 mentions

- Not enough seating

- Seating too far from equipment
- Toilets far away / not open
- Need more tables, bins
- Desire for coffee access

Need for Fencing / Enclosure — 14 mentions

- Not fenced
- Toddlers can run away
- Too close to steep hill edges
- Desire for separated fenced younger + older areas

Poor Layout & Cohesion — 10 mentions

- Long, linear layout
- Poor line-of-sight
- Play spaces too separated
- Doesn't feel cohesive as a precinct

Parking & Access Issues — 11 mentions

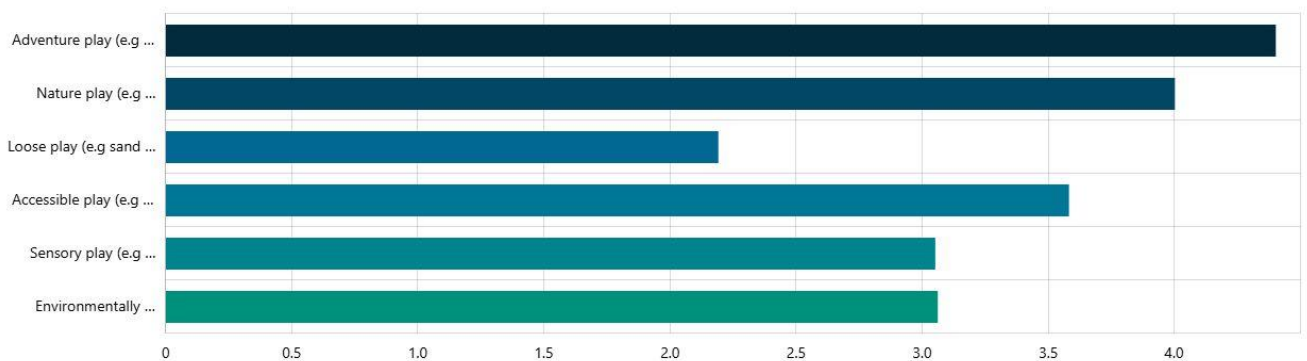
- Not enough parking
- Difficult to find a spot
- Far from carpark

Ground / Surfacing Issues — 7 mentions

- Bark too rough / splintery
- Hard for infants
- Muddy or slippery areas

Question 3

Survey respondents were asked, when looking at the planning of the play precinct, please rank the following in order of importance (top being most important, bottom being least important)



Name	Score
Adventure play (e.g. challenging/risk related activity)	4.40
Nature play (e.g. natural/tactile activities)	4.00
Loose play (e.g. sand play)	2.19
Accessible play (e.g. inclusive to people with all abilities)	3.58
Sensory play (e.g. touch/smell/hearing activities)	3.05
Environmentally friendly design/material (e.g. reduced carbon footprint)	3.06

Question 4

Survey respondents were asked, is there anything else you would like to add?

Key themes from 112 responses were...

More Equipment for Older Kids / Adventure Play (Parkour, Ninja, Climbing, Big Slides, Flying Fox) - 42 mentions

- Ninja/parkour elements
- Ropes courses
- Climbing walls
- Big slides, long slides, hill slides
- Flying fox improvements
- Adventure-based challenges
- More “big kid” stimulation

Shade & Weather Protection (Shade Sails, Shaded Seating, Sun Safety) - 22 mentions

- Bring back removed shade sails
- Shade over equipment
- Shade for adults watching
- Heat concerns in summer

Fencing & Safety (Full Enclosure, Safer Edges, Toddler Safety) - 19 mentions

- Fully fenced playground
- Separate fenced toddler zone
- Safer fencing near slopes/cliff edges
- Fixing bridge gaps
- General safety-first design

Seating, Tables & Parent Visibility - 17 mentions

- More seating
- Seating closer to play
- Shaded tables
- Better view lines for supervising children

Water Play / Sensory Play (Splash Pad, Natural Water Elements) - 15 mentions

- Water/splash play
- Water pumps & sensory features
- Wet-area play for summer
- Examples: Silvan, Woodend

Keep It Natural / Keep Timber / No Modern Plastic Overdesign - 14 mentions

- Preserve natural timber look
- Keep it simple, avoid plastic/metal “statement art”
- Maintain the garden character
- Avoid overdevelopment

Accessibility, Inclusion & Universal Design - 12 mentions

- Wheelchair-accessible play
- Tactile and sensory features
- Accessible pathways
- Seating areas for disabled parents
- Inclusive design principles

Parking & General Access Improvements - 11 mentions

- More parking
- Safer walk from carpark
- Capacity issues on weekends
- Park access improvements

More Play Areas / Multi-Zone Layout (Two or More Play Spaces) - 10 mentions

- A second playground in another part of the gardens
- Spread-out themed play nodes
- Reduce crowding at current location
- Adventure trails

More Swings & High-Demand Items - 9 mentions

- More swings
- Parent/child swings
- Big swings
- Basket swings

Toddler-Friendly Features (Safe Zones, Gentle Equipment) - 7 mentions

- Toddler-only safe play area
- Lower equipment
- Better separation from older kids
- Softer landing materials

Sand / Surfacing Improvements - 6 mentions

- Sand pit
- Better ground cover
- Less bark
- Rubber surfacing

Keep the Playground As Is (Minimal Changes / Preserve Character) - 6 mentions

- “Don’t ruin it”
- Keep timber
- Maintain classic feel
- Only add, don’t replace

More Variety (General) / Make It Bigger - 5 mentions

- Bigger footprint
- More space
- Wider range of activities