

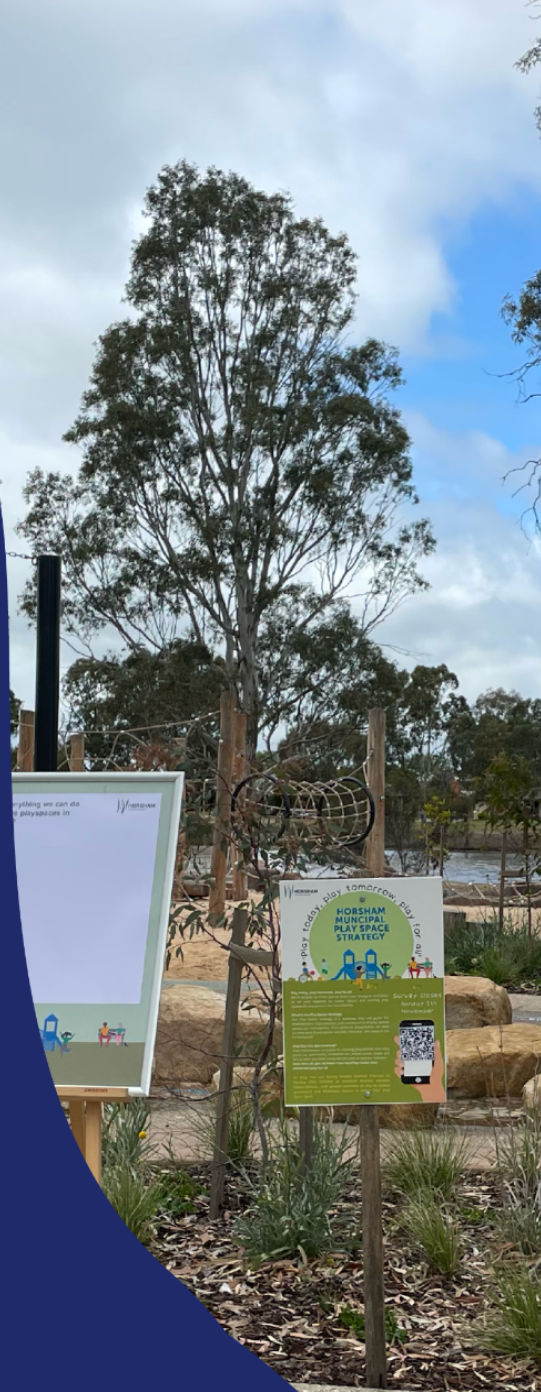
Play Today, Play tomorrow,
Play for all


Horsham City Council
Engagement Summary Report

November 2023

Prepared by

Conversation Co.





Conversation Co acknowledges the five
Traditional Owner groups of this land - the
Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and
Jadawadjali people. We recognise the important
and ongoing place that all Indigenous people hold
in our community.

1. Executive Summary

Project overview

Horsham Rural City Council is currently responsible for 23 play spaces within Horsham and five additional spaces in the municipality. Council is developing a Play Space Strategy which will be a roadmap to guide the development, improvement, and maintenance of play spaces across the Horsham Rural City municipality.

The Strategy will investigate a range of settings and opportunities for play, and consider the importance of unstructured, natural play and the connection to nature and natural materials. The Strategy will consider the different use of public spaces and how equipment can be integrated and accessible, where infrastructure supports a learning through play philosophy.

An external engagement company Conversation Co. was responsible for the planning and delivery of the engagement program. A mixed-method community engagement program consisting of online and face-to-face activities was used to reach participants from a range of different levels of interest in the project. Implementation of the engagement activities was conducted from 4 October to 5 November 2023.

The intended outcomes from this engagement program were to:

- Understand current user behaviours and activities at Horsham municipality play spaces.
- Understand user needs for access, equity and intergenerational opportunities.
- Provide an opportunity for users to identify improvements to existing play spaces.

Participation

A total of 666 participants were involved in this engagement. The *Your Say* online/hard copy survey attracted the most participants (567 participants, 85.1%). About one-third of the participants were a parent/carer of a child who uses play spaces (30.1%), 21.4% were families who use play spaces and 18.7% were children or young people who use play spaces. Engagement participants mostly resided in Horsham (73.4%) and were most often aged between 15 - 24 years (22.4%), 35 - 44 years (22.3%) and 25 - 34 years (20.9%).

There was a total of 14.6% representation of those with sensory or intellectual requirements, with 10.0% of participants stating that they care for someone with these requirements, and 4.6% having these requirements themselves.

There was a total 13.6% representation of those with accessibility/mobility requirements, with 9.0% of participants stating that they care for someone with these requirements, and 4.6% of participants having requirements themselves.

Face-to-face consultation was undertaken through community pop-ups designed to reach a high number of participants going about their day-to-day activities. These were held at

Horsham's Spring Garden Festival in the Botanic Gardens and Wimmera Play and Water Park on the same day, Saturday 14 October. A third pop-up, run by Council, was held at Haven Market on Saturday 5 November.

In addition to these face-to-face sessions, internal and external workshops were held during October. Findings from these sessions are included in this report.

Key findings

Engagement participants commonly found plenty of shade, equipment for all ages, toilets, a variety of play experiences and places to sit/rest to be important features of play spaces. Other important features nominated by participants included fencing of play spaces (n=11), disc golf equipment (n=3) and equipment for all abilities (n=3).

Looking at the different preferences by their interest in play spaces, children and young people prioritised equipment for all ages, plenty of shade, places to sit/rest, toilets and green grass. Compared to children and young people, the adult family members (parents, carers, grandparents) placed more importance on the variety of play experiences, nature play and barbecue and picnic facilities. Compared to children and young people, the community members placed more importance on toilets, nature play and barbecue and picnic facilities.

The most popular playground activities were found to be swinging, climbing, jumping and splashing. The participants who nominated other playground activities predominantly said "sliding".

A total of 28 parks within the municipality were visited by participants - the most commonly visited were Botanical Gardens, May Park, Gardenia Street Park, Adventure Island West and Weir Park. Participants most often drove (41.8%), walked (35.4%) or cycled/rode (20.9%) to travel to these spaces.

Overall there were 796 comments outlining participants' preferred features of play spaces. In broad terms, the engagement participants most liked:

1. The open spaces for children to run in and make up their own games, the green grass/lawn and the clean looking appearance.
2. The variety of play equipment/experiences that suit most age groups.
3. Shade.
4. Specific play equipment - swings, slides, monkey bars, climbing equipment, water play.
5. Nature and natural materials - Water, sand, gardens/flowers, being close to nature.

There was a total of 969 comments provided on how to improve play spaces in the municipality. The major improvements suggested by the engagement participants were:

1. Upgraded or more play equipment (no specific details provided).
2. Shade.

3. Equipment and spaces suitable for all age groups but more options for babies and toddlers 1-2 years, children aged 9-12 years and teenagers.
4. Park furniture - seating, tables for picnics and parties, rubbish bins.
5. Adjacent informal recreation to complement play - Disc golf, basketball courts, swimming pools/water slides, flying fox, goals/nets for ball sports.

Survey participants were asked the open question “Is there anything else we can do to increase play experiences and opportunities in Horsham?”. In total there were 274 comments provided. These comments were categorised into the four common themes below:

- Improvement suggestions that could increase current usage (site not identified) (n=123).
- Suggestions for new play space sites (n=69).
- Other ideas that could increase current usage (n=23).
- Improvement suggestions that could increase current usage of existing play spaces (n=22).

Section 16 of this report summarises the findings from the stakeholder consultation and community engagement in greater detail. These findings will come together with research, site and planning analysis work that have also been undertaken to form a comprehensive set of key recommendations within the Horsham Play Spaces Review and Strategy report.

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2. Introduction

Horsham Rural City Council is currently responsible for 23 play spaces within Horsham township and five additional spaces in the wider municipality. Council's 2019 *Open Space Strategy* report identified the following priority actions for play spaces in the municipality:

- To identify gaps in facilities and amenities to prioritise and guide upgrades.
- To improve the quality of existing play spaces by identifying and addressing gaps in quality and variety to ensure the needs of all ages are met.
- To develop play spaces across the municipality which address gaps in provision and amenity.

To enable these actions, Council is developing a Play Space Review and Strategy which will be a roadmap to guide the future development, improvement, and maintenance of play spaces across the Horsham Rural City municipality.

Development of the Strategy will investigate a range of settings and opportunities for play and work towards more diverse experiences for the whole community. The Strategy will consider different, but complementary uses of parks, how spaces can be made more integrated and accessible, and how spaces can support different age groups to gather and play together. Most of all the Strategy will support the community to come together, celebrate local identity, and value opportunities to connect with the natural environment.

3. Engagement Methodology

An external engagement company Conversation Co. was responsible for the planning and delivery of the engagement program. An engagement plan was developed outlining:

- Project timelines and scope.
- Challenges and opportunities associated with engaging families with young children.
- Level of stakeholder influence, including negotiables and non-negotiables for input.
- Outline of engagement activities planned.
- Measures of success for the project.

A mixed-method community engagement program consisting of online and face-to-face activities was used to reach participants from a range of different levels of interest in the project. The engagement activities were based on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum of 'Inform' and 'Consult'.

3.1 Engagement Objectives

The objectives of this engagement project were to:

- Understand current user behaviours and activities at Horsham municipality play spaces.
- Understand user needs for access, equity and multi-generational opportunities.
- Provide an opportunity for users to identify improvements to existing play spaces.

3.2 Engagement Activities

The engagement activities are listed in Table 1 and were developed to best suit the project timeline and budget. Community engagement was conducted from 4 October to 5 November 2023.

Table 1. Engagement activities

Activity	Rationale	Stakeholders	Engagement
Online survey	Provided opportunity for participants to provide confidential information at their convenience, without having to attend face-to-face engagement.	General community Visitors to the area	4 October to 5 November 2023
Community based pop-ups	Provided opportunity for a wider range of participants to comment on the project	General community Visitors to the area	Saturday 14 October 9am-5pm Spring Garden Festival (Horsham Botanic Gardens); 1pm-3pm Wimmera Nature and Water Play Park Saturday 4 November, 9am-12 noon - Haven Market
Council staff Workshop (90 minutes duration, online)	Created internal awareness of benefits of the project and understanding current and emerging issues and opportunities, as well as play and recreation trends	Council Staff	11 October 2023
Community Workshop (90 minutes duration, online)	Provided opportunity for in-depth conversations, information sharing and collaboration.	Community groups in the areas of disability and inclusion, active ageing, LGBTIQ+, youth, early years and older teens.	2 November 2023

The abbreviation “n=” is used throughout this report to indicate the number of participants, responses or mentions.

4. Who Participated?

4.1 Participation by engagement activity

Table 2 shows a summary of the engagement activities which involved a total of 667 participants. It should be noted that participants were able to participate in more than one engagement activity.

Table 2. Participation by engagement activity

Engagement Activity	No.	%
Online survey hosted on <i>Have Your Say</i>	567	85.1
Community pop-ups	79	11.9
Council staff Workshop	8	1.2
Community Workshop	12	1.8
TOTAL	666	100%

4.2 Participation by interest in play spaces

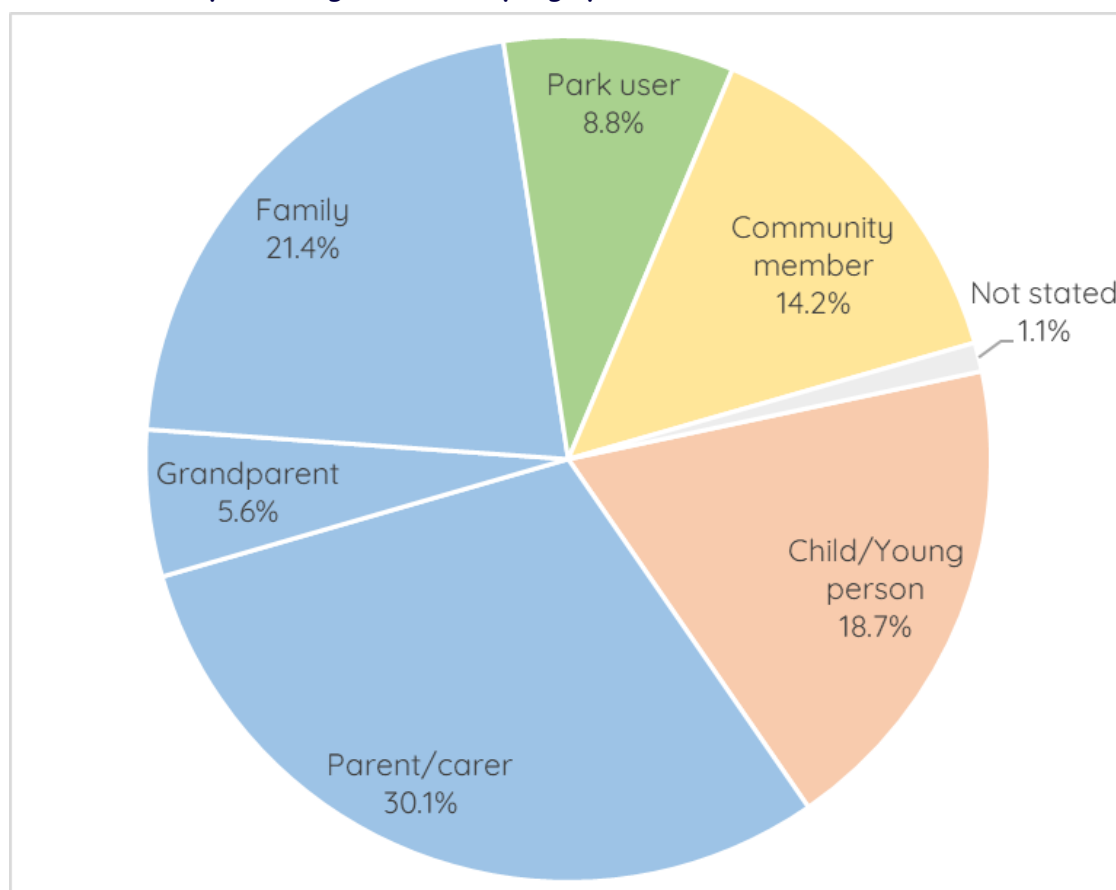
Those who entered their feedback in the online survey or completed a demographic collection card at the pop-ups were prompted to select their interest in play spaces, and were able to select all that applied. The most common categories were parent/carers of a child who uses play spaces (188), family who uses play spaces (134) and Child or young person who uses play spaces (117). Table 3 shows the breakdown of interest by level of participation.

Table 3. Participation by interest in play spaces

Interest in play spaces	No.	%
Parent/carers of a child who uses play spaces	188	30.1
Family who uses play spaces	134	21.4
Child or young person who uses play spaces	117	18.7
Interested community member	89	14.2
Park user	55	8.8
Grandparent of a child who uses play spaces	35	5.6
Not stated	7	1.1
TOTAL participants	625	100

Data sources: Online survey and community pop-ups.

Chart 1. Participation by interest in play spaces



4.3 Characteristics of participants

The characteristics of the survey and pop-up participants are shown in Table 4. Teenagers and young adults, adults aged 35-44 years and 25-34 years were the largest age cohorts. Compared to the age profile of the municipal population, children aged 5-14 years were proportionally represented and the target age groups (adults of child rearing age) were over-represented. Chart 2 shows this age comparison.

There were 33 participants who indicated an accessibility/mobility requirement (13.6% of participants) ranging from the use of a pram to conditions such as polio and cerebral palsy. The most common restriction was the use of a walking frame, walking stick or wheelchair (n=26). Others did not use walking aids but had trouble lifting their feet over obstacles or walking on uneven surfaces, and two participants had vision impairments.

There were 38 participants (14.6%) who had intellectual/sensory requirements with autism spectrum disorder and sound/sensory conditions being the most common. Five participants indicated that they or their child had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

In terms of geographic coverage, residents of Horsham and Haven were proportionally represented whereas residents from the other districts were under-represented.

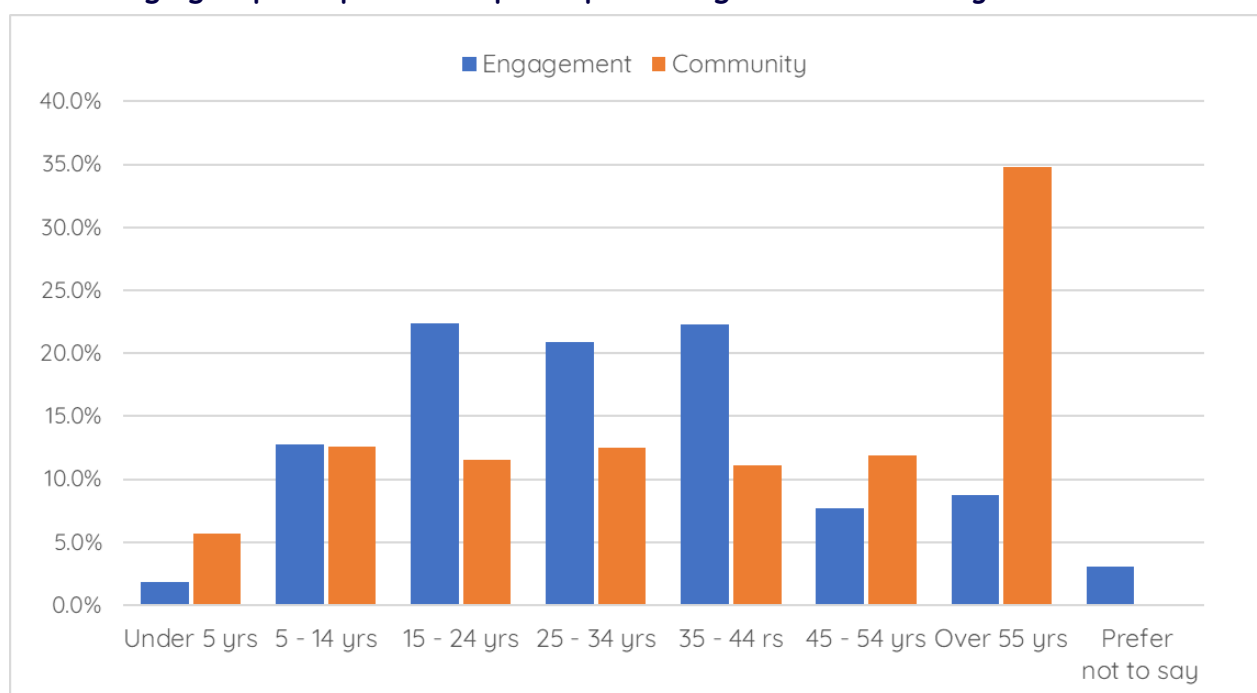
Table 4. Characteristics of participants

Selected characteristics	Total No.	Total %	2021 Census* %
Age Group:			
Under 5 years	11	1.8	5.7
5 - 14 years	78	12.8	12.6
15 - 24 years	137	22.4	11.5
25 - 34 years	128	20.9	12.5
35 - 44 years	136	22.3	11.1
45 - 54 years	47	7.7	11.9
Over 55 years	53	8.7	34.8
Prefer not to say	19	3.1	-
Not stated	2	0.3	-
Accessibility-Mobility:			na
Has accessibility/mobility requirements	27	4.6	
Someone they care for has accessibility/mobility requirements	53	9.0	
No accessibility/mobility requirements	462	78.0	
Prefer not to say	47	7.9	
Not stated	3	0.5	
Sensory-Intellectual:			na
Has intellectual/sensory requirements	27	4.6	
Someone they care for has intellectual/sensory requirements	59	10.0	
No intellectual/sensory requirements	438	74.2	
Prefer not to say	59	10.0	
Not stated	7	1.2	
Districts of residence:			
Horsham	444	73.4	73.9

Selected characteristics	Total No.	Total %	2021 Census* %
Haven	41	6.8	7.4
Natimuk-Rural West	23	3.8	6.6
Jung-Rural North	13	2.1	5.0
Rural South	9	1.5	7.2
Outside municipality	23	3.8	-
Not stated	52	8.6	-

Data sources: Online survey, pop-ups participants where provided. Data source for 2021 Census data is <https://profile.id.com.au/horsham/five-year-age-groups> and population counts for Horsham districts.

Chart 2. Age group comparison of participants to general community



5. Key Findings

5.1 Important features of play spaces

Survey participants were asked: “What are the most important features of play spaces for you?” and could nominate up to five features from a list of 19 features. There were 2,678 responses including other suggestions made by participants.

Table 5a shows the most popular features (in descending order) as plenty of shade, equipment for all ages, toilets, a variety of play experiences and places to sit/rest. Other important features nominated by participants included fencing of play spaces (n=11), disc golf equipment (n=3) and equipment for all abilities (n=3).

Table 5b shows the same information ranked by popularity and organised into four categories - amenity features, locational features, natural features and play features.

Table 5a. Important features of playspaces

Feature	No. (%)	Feature	No. (%)
Plenty of shade	340 (12.2%)	Barbecue and picnic facilities	95 (3.4%)
Equipment for all ages	309 (11.0%)	Imaginative play	67 (2.4%)
Toilets	307 (11.0%)	Outdoor fitness equipment	64 (2.3%)
Variety of play experiences	254 (9.1%)	Accessible features	50 (1.9%)
Places to sit/rest	251 (9.0%)	Parking	49 (1.8%)
Green grass	228 (8.1%)	Located near other facilities	38 (1.4%)
Challenging/adventure play	170 (6.1%)	Other (fences, disc golf)	32 (1.1%)
Close to home	143 (5.1%)	Loose materials	15 (0.5%)
Access to drinking water	130 (4.6%)	Close to public transport	8 (0.3%)
Nature play	121 (4.3%)	Near school/kinder/childcare	7 (0.3%)
		TOTAL	100%

Data source: Online survey

Note: Multi-response question, percentages are of all responses not participants..

Table 5b. Ranked important features by feature type

AMENITY <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Toilets 2. Places to sit/rest 3. Access to drinking water 4. Barbecue and picnic facilities 5. Accessible features 6. Parking 	LOCATION <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close to home 2. Located near other facilities 3. Close to public transport 4. Near school/kinder/childcare
NATURAL FEATURES <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plenty of shade 2. Green grass 3. Loose materials 	PLAY <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equipment for all ages 2. Variety of play experiences 3. Challenging/adventure play 4. Nature play 5. Imaginative play 6. Outdoor fitness equipment

Looking at the different preferences by their interest in play spaces, children and young people prioritised equipment for all ages, plenty of shade, places to sit/rest, toilets and green grass. Compared to children and young people, the adult family members (parents, carers, grandparents) placed more importance on the variety of play experiences, nature play and barbecue and picnic facilities. Compared to children and young people, the community members placed more importance on toilets, nature play and barbecue and picnic facilities.

Table 5c. Top ten important features by interest in play spaces

Children and young people n=108	Adult family members n=357	Community members n=144
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equipment for all ages 2. Plenty of shade 3. Places to sit/rest 4. Toilets 5. Green grass 6. Access to drinking water 7. Challenging/adventure play 8. Close to home 9. Variety of play experiences 10. Outdoor fitness equipment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plenty of shade 2. Variety of play experiences 3. Equipment for all ages 4. Toilets 5. Places to sit/rest 6. Green grass 7. Challenging/adventure play 8. Close to home 9. Nature play 10. Barbecue and picnic facilities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Toilets 2. Equipment for all ages 3. Plenty of shade 4. Places to sit/rest 5. Green grass 6. Access to drinking water 7. Variety of play experiences 8. Outdoor fitness equipment 9. Barbecue and picnic facilities 10. Nature play

5.2 Playground and recreation activities

Survey participants were asked: “What playground activities do you, or those you care for like most?” and could choose three playground activities from a list of 13 activities (1541 responses in total).

Table 6 shows the most popular playground activities (in descending order) as swinging, climbing, jumping and splashing. The participants who nominated other playground activities predominantly said “sliding”.

Table 6. Playground activities liked most by participants (top three)

Activity	No. (%)	Activity	No. (%)
Swinging	350 (22.7%)	Hanging	66 (4.3%)
Climbing (within play space)	301 (19.5%)	Imagining	61 (3.9%)
Jumping	158 (10.2%)	Building	60 (3.9%)
Splashing	158 (10.2%)	Scooting	51 (3.3%)
Balancing	109 (7.1%)	Skating	36(2.3%)
Throwing	76 (4.9%)	Other (sliding)	28 (1.8%)
Creating	66 (4.3%)	Rocking	25 (1.6%)
		TOTAL	100%

Data source: Online survey

Note: Multi-response question, percentages are of all responses not participants. A small number of participants provided recreation answers in the playground question, and vice versa - these answers were moved to the appropriate question.

Survey participants were also asked: “What active recreation activities do you like to do?”

Table 7 shows the most popular recreation activities in descending order - there were 2,173 responses in this question. One in five participants nominated walking (20.2%) and other popular activities were climbing, riding on a bike or BMX track and ‘Kick-to-kick’. Participants who nominated other recreation activities such as swimming, soccer, football, volleyball, running and hockey.

Table 7. Recreation activities liked most by participants

Activity	No. (%)	Activity	No. (%)
Walking	442 (20.2%)	Cricket	92 (4.2%)
Climbing	193 (8.8%)	Skate Park	84 (3.8%)
Bike/BMX track	176 (8.0%)	Disc golf	84 (3.8%)
Kick-to-kick	172 (7.9%)	Rebound wall	79 (3.6%)
Basketball	160 (7.3%)	Table tennis	65 (3.0%)
Tennis	155 (7.1%)	Futsal	18 (0.8%)
Parkour	153 (7.0%)	Other (incl. swimming, soccer, football, volleyball, running and hockey)	60 (2.7%)
Outdoor gym	126 (5.8%)	Bocce	4 (0.2%)
Netball	125 (5.7%)		
		TOTAL	100%

Data source: Online survey

Note: Multi-response question, percentages are of all responses not participants. A small number of participants provided recreation answers in the playground question, and vice versa - these answers were moved to the appropriate question.

5.3 Local play spaces used

Table 8 shows that the most popular (visited) play spaces were, in descending order: Botanical Gardens, May Park, Gardenia Street Park, Adventure Island West and Weir Park.

Table 8. Local play spaces used by participants (alphabetical order)

Location of play space	No. (%)	Location of play space	No. (%)
Adventure Island East-pump track	183 (6.4%)	Jung Peppertree Park	7 (0.2%)
Adventure Island West	257 (9.0%)	Lawrence Street Park	9 (0.3%)
Apex Park (Bennett Road)	85 (3.0%)	May Park	351 (12.3%)
Bodey Court Park	11 (0.4%)	Major Mitchell Drive	67 (2.3%)
Botanical Gardens	352 (12.3%)	Natimuk Skate Park - The Verge	33 (1.2%)
Cameron Oval	11 (0.4%)	Pioneer Court	9 (0.3%)
Charisma Park	10 (0.4%)	Oatlands Park (Wavell Street Park)	29 (1.0%)
City Oval (Firebrace Street)	74 (2.6%)	Quantong Recreation Reserve	27 (0.9%)

Location of play space	No. (%)	Location of play space	No. (%)
Drummond Street Park	24 (0.8%)	Racecourse Reserve – Central Park tennis court	80 (2.8%)
Elbourne Park	54 (1.9%)	Sunnyside Park	82 (2.9%)
Gardenia Street Park	347 (12.2%)	Telangatuk Hall	10 (0.4%)
Haven Recreation Reserve	106 (3.7%)	Uebergang Park	23 (0.8%)
Horsham Skate Park	86 (3.0%)	Weir Park	256 (9.0%)
Horsham Nature & Water Play Park	238 (8.3%)	Other	2 (0%)
Jardwa Park (Arnott Street)	29 (1.0%)	TOTAL	100%

Data source: Online survey and community pop-ups.

Note: Multi-response question, percentages are of all responses not participants.

Most participants were driving (41.8%) or walking (35.4%) to these playspaces (refer to Table 9 and Chart3)..

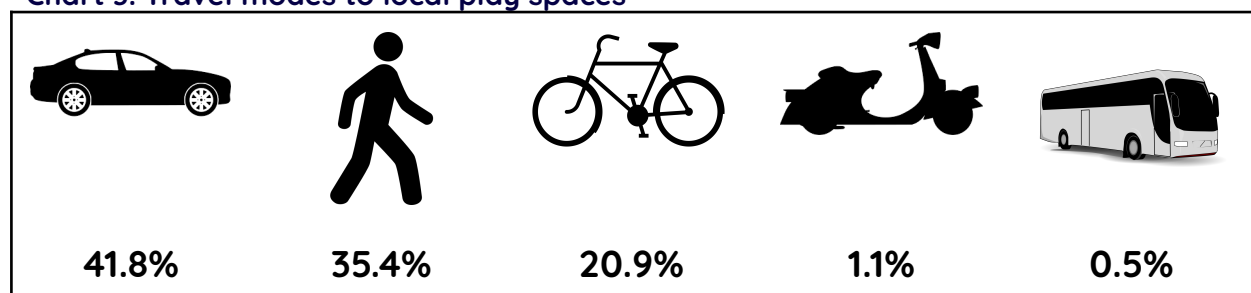
Table 9. Travel modes to local play spaces

Travel modes	Total No.	Total %
Drive	412	41.8
Walk	349	35.4
Bike/ride	206	20.9
Mobility equipment	11	1.1
Public transport	5	0.5
Other	3	0.3
TOTAL responses	986	100%

Data source: Online survey.

Note: Multi-response question, percentages are of all responses not participants.

Chart 3. Travel modes to local play spaces



5.4 Preferred features of play spaces

Survey participants were asked the open question “What do you like most about the parks you visit?” and pop-up participants were asked “Which play spaces do you use and why?” In total there were 796 comments provided. Table 10 shows the major themes of the features participants liked and further detail on the infrastructure or elements of the play spaces.

In broad terms, the engagement participants most liked:

1. The open spaces for children to run in and make up their own games, the green grass/lawn and the clean looking appearance.
2. The variety of play equipment/experiences that suit most age groups.
3. Shade.
4. Specific play equipment - swings, slides, monkey bars, climbing equipment, water play.
5. Nature and natural materials - Water, sand, gardens/flowers, being close to nature.

Appendix 1 (provided separately to this report) lists specific play spaces and the features that users liked.

Table 10. Features of preferred play spaces

Themes (number of comments in descending order)	Examples mentioned
Open space maintenance and appearance (n=108)	Amount of open space available - enough for children to run in and make up their own games, green grass/lawns, clean looking-well maintained appearance
Variety of play equipment/experiences (n=77)	Range of equipment that suits most age groups
Shade (n=71)	
Play equipment - specific items (n=63)	Swings, slides, monkey bars, climbing equipment, water play. Opportunity for creative and imaginative play
Nature and natural materials (n=53)	Water, sand, gardens/flowers, near river, nature play and exploring, being close to nature

Park furniture (n=46)	Seating for parents/grandparents and carers to watch children play, picnic tables/tables for parties
Location and access (n=44)	Close to home or town, can walk or cycle there
Play equipment - generic (n=37)	No specific items mentioned e.g., "the equipment"
Suitable for age group or temperament (n=37)	Range of age groups are covered in most instances
Recreation equipment - specific sports (n=34)	Kicking footballs, walking and cycling tracks, basketball hoops
Toilets (n=32)	
Accessible play spaces (n=31)	Term "accessible" was broadly used - used to describe the location of play space, provides mobility and disability access, can be used without instructions, can be used by adults.
Fences, gates, barriers (n=29)	Seen as essential for small children, particularly near river and roads
Built infrastructure maintenance and appearance (n=19)	Equipment is clean and well maintained, upgraded equipment
Safety and perception of safety (n=19)	Value being able to watch children at all locations, appreciate fencing where provided, equipment that is newer and safer to use
Coffee, food, drinking fountains (n=17)	
Social opportunities (n=14)	Value being surrounded by other people, can meet friends and family there, can mix in seating areas
Barbeques (n=13)	
Recreation equipment/facilities - generic (n=12)	No specific items mentioned e.g. "sporting facilities"

Data sources: Online survey

In addition to the comments shown in Table 10, an additional 39 participants made generic comments about liking one or more play spaces and ten other participants made comments that were not relevant to the topic.

5.5 Improvements to play spaces

Survey and pop-up participants were asked the open question “How could these play spaces be improved?” In total there were 969 comments provided. Table 11 shows the major themes of the improvement suggestions and further detail about infrastructure or play spaces.

The major improvements suggested by the engagement participants were:

1. Upgraded or more play equipment (no specific details provided).
2. Shade.
3. Equipment and spaces suitable for all age groups but more options for babies and toddlers 1-2 years, children aged 9-12 years and teenagers.
4. Park furniture - seating, tables for picnics and parties, rubbish bins.
5. Recreation equipment - Disc golf, basketball courts, swimming pools/water slides, flying fox, goals/nets for ball sports.

Appendix 2 (provided separately to this report) lists specific play spaces and their improvement ideas from engagement participants.

Table 11. Suggested improvements to play spaces

Themes (number of comments in descending order)	Direct comment examples
Upgraded or more play equipment - generic (n=112)	No specific items mentioned e.g. “more play equipment”, “better equipment”, “upgrade equipment”, “more variety”
Shade (n=101)	Equipment gets too hot to use especially in summer and in afternoons Sun protection is important for all age groups
Suitable for all or other age groups (n=90)	Age groups that are perceived to be under-served: Babies and toddlers 1-2 years Children aged 9-12 years Teenagers (taller, need bigger equipment, need private spaces)
Park furniture (n=83)	Predominantly seating Tables for picnics and parties Rubbish bins
Recreation equipment - specific sports (n=64)	Disc golf facilities (n=15) Basketball courts (n=9) Inground or mini trampolines (n=5) Swimming pool/water slide (n=5) Flying fox (n=4) Goals/nets for ball sports, practise sport skills (n=4) Zip line (n=2) Beginner skate park (n=2)

	Improve the Horsham velodrome track, handball court, roller skating rink, Bounce, Mini Golf, adult exercise equipment, Parkour, 2v2 Pro-Am, another BMX park
Toilets (n=56)	Lack of toilets means some parks aren't used at all by families Upgraded toilets, suitable for small children
Play equipment - specific items (n=55)	Swings - bigger swings, swings for adults, tire swings Slides Climbing equipment Interactive equipment Sandpit and scoopers Mazes Adventure playground
Fences, gates, barriers (n=52)	Seen as essential for small children, particularly near river and roads, concern about potential drownings in river
Built infrastructure maintenance and appearance - additional to the reported issues with the Water Park pump (n=44)	Smaller parks that are not maintained, nor have much equipment and has older equipment Updating or changing equipment every 6 months to keep the kids interested and not bored Closed-in areas to have kids party for larger groups if rain or cold Cleanliness - bird poo removed, wash down the paths and equipment more often (phone) charging stations were being vandalised. More equipment and cover so they don't get wet Recharge places Install signage - no smoking, how to use the water play equipment, paths to toilets, wheelchair access, BBQs, online information, disabled parking during events
Safety and perception of safety - additional to the suggestions for fencing and lighting (n=40)	More safety features Security cameras or monitoring - toilets Safer paths with pedestrian crossings for kids riding scooters and bikes Have safer play equipment for children 1-2 years old and toddlers Water play park - stone boulders in the wet area are a safety risk Major Mitchell is the only play space completely safe for toddlers, others are too dangerous May Park and Weir Park - dangerous for young children, very high with open spaces at the top Jardwa Park has a dangerous slide

	<p>Open spaces to also be able to practise learning to ride in a safe environment</p> <p>Areas to safely climb, hang and fall/land</p> <p>The Station (gathering place) - instead of kids having to go there it needs to be outside for them to feel safer</p> <p>Line of sight is important through the grounds</p>
Open space maintenance and appearance (n=39)	<p>Some paths need of repair (potholes)</p> <p>Clean up garden areas</p> <p>Adventure Island could do with a nice boardwalk or entrance path from the bridge to the park - can become muddy and slippery and hard</p> <p>Adventure Island needs a grass area and shade.</p> <p>Cleaning and maintenance on a regular basis</p> <p>Lawns to be well maintained, mowed more often</p> <p>Rubbish collected more regularly</p> <p>Bennett Road needs grass watered</p> <p>Maintaining the grass and plants with water in the summer to keep them cooler and more inviting</p> <p>Playground along the river is always dry</p> <p>Better quality grass</p> <p>Maintain seasonal plantings for colour</p> <p>Get rid of the weeds and make it all green grass</p>
Coffee, food, barbeques, drinking fountains and water bottle refills (n=36)	<p>Keeps visitors at the play space rather than moving on to the shopping centres</p>
Upgraded or more open spaces - generic (n=35)	<p>More nature based play</p> <p>Improve bike tracks and linking more play spaces along the bike/hike trail along both sides of the river</p> <p>Nice lawns and spongy surfaces</p> <p>More green space where kids can roll around on or kick the ball</p> <p>Paths that are sealed for road bikes, not loose gravel</p> <p>Have central space for field activity and provide other facilities on the fringe</p> <p>Natural elements encouraging explorative play - rocks, gardens beds</p> <p>More space so people can spread out, more private spaces for families and people with sensory issues</p> <p>Facilities for dogs - lead tie-offs, water taps/bowls, dog poop bags, more areas for dogs</p>
Water play and improved water infrastructure -	<p>Repair of pump at Water Park so it works consistently</p> <p>More water play facilities/splash parks like Mildura water park</p>

excluding swimming pools and water slides (n=35)	Water jets and fountains like Victoria Park Metal designs of the Water Play park seem dangerous e.g. the yabby Duck pond
Facilities and equipment for all abilities (n=28)	Wheelchair accessible parks and the space to move them around More inclusive for people with disabilities - wheelchair swings/wheelchair accessible carousel, sensory play areas Make all parks safe for kids with special needs Multi-ability and age appropriate equipment More diversity of experiences Bark chips is a barrier for people with disabilities Kids accessible pool and water play Interactive at a lower ground level Bench seats with handrails Borrowing/hire wheelchairs
Lighting (n=9)	Better lighting for safety at night and on the paths Consider toning down colours and lights for kids with sensory needs, light strips.
Trees and vegetation (n=7)	More trees planted for shade Native plants and gardens
Parking and public transport (n=6)	Disabled parking when events are on. Seniors parking. No parking at Elbourne Park - would be nice to have the option to park. Arnott Street Park has limited parking as it's generally full from hospital staff. Safer parking at Botanical Gardens and more disabled parking (only two spots) Bus stop closer to Nature Park

Data sources: Online survey and community pop-ups.

In addition to the comments shown in Table 16, an additional six participants made critical complaints about Council processes or decisions and six other participants made comments that were not relevant to the topic.

5.6 Increasing play opportunities

Survey participants were asked the open question “Is there anything else we can do to increase play experiences and opportunities in Horsham?”. In total there were 274 comments provided.

Comments have been categorised as follows:

- Improvement suggestions that could increase current usage (site not identified).
- Suggestions for new play space sites.
- Other ideas that could increase current usage.
- Improvement suggestions that could increase current usage of existing play spaces.

Table 12 shows the feedback provided under these categories.

Table 12. Suggestions to increase play opportunities

Themes	Examples mentioned
Improvement suggestions that could increase current usage - sites not identified (n=123)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More shade - shade cloth, weather appropriate, trees (n=11) • Supporting accessibility and sensory needs - wheelchair swings, sport/outdoor activities for all abilities, disability friendly (n=10) • More seating/adequate seating/shaded seating (n=10) • Disc golf opportunities (n=9) • All-age friendly equipment (n=8) • Suggestions to improve safety - safety for all ages, fences, locking at night, CCTV and surveillance (n=7) •
Suggestions for new play space sites (n=69)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Waterlinks Estate (n=33) • At other new estates (n=7) • At other locations - Horsham West (n=2), Horsham North, Sunnyside, end of Williams Road, Burnt Creek, Fisher Square, near West PS, Play and Park area in the west (behind the child care area), Telangatuk • More play spaces in general (n=23) - range of different types
Other ideas that could increase current usage (n=23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cafes - encourage pop-up cafes on the weekends, cafe at the river parks (great for summer time); canteen near Splash, Park/Adventure Island selling drinks and sandwiches, sunscreen, individual nappies etc • Communications - provide information on where smaller parks are located; provide information to new families; playground map or common theme to encourage kids to explore other playgrounds (like a treasure map); signs explaining where to report damage to equipment (quicker repairs); advertise park spaces and use play places to promote local businesses; interactive maps; communication board • Adjacent community events - hold periodic fun activities in outdoor spaces adjacent to the existing play areas; live music

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research - research other best practice playgrounds (n=3) ● Community engagement - consult with kindergartens; open and actually listen to what the community wants (n=4), consult with parents of young kids; prioritise Horsham North community feedback; fairly spend funding across all areas ● Perception of safety - want undesirable people moved on or excluded
Improvements to increase current usage of existing play spaces (n=22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Horsham Nature & Water Play Park - fix the water pump, add fencing, upgrade to match comparable parks (n=7) ● Adventure Island - upgrade (n=3) ● Apex Park - shade and fencing (n=2) ● Weir Park - upgrade (n=2) ● Uebergang Park - upgrade (n=2) ● Charisma Park, Wavell Street, Gardenia Street, Skate Park, Botanical Gardens, Haven

Data source: Online survey

5.7 Council Staff Workshop

A 90-minute online workshop was held on 11 October 2023 for Council staff from a range of relevant departments. Participants undertook a facilitated workshop to further their understanding of the Play Space Strategy, discuss the interim findings of the engagement program and provide feedback on four questions relating to Horsham's play spaces, and two regarding their roles and responsibilities.

There were a total of 8 participants in this exercise, from which data was collected via an interactive online product *Mentimeter*. The session *Mentimeter* was left open for further input by participants for one week, closing on 18 October 2023.

Council staff were asked the following key questions

- How can we provide access to a variety of play spaces to people from all townships and local areas?
- Are there any key issues to be considered?
- How can play spaces and play opportunities be improved across the municipality?
- How can we inform the community about the play opportunities across the municipality?
- How can the strategy help you to deliver and maintain play spaces more effectively in the future?
- What support do you need?

Participants were able to enter their comments into the *Mentimeter* or provide a verbal response to a facilitator. Table 13 below presents a summary of the feedback received under each question.

Table 13. Summary of feedback from Council staff Workshop

Workshop discussion item	Staff feedback
Providing access to a variety of play spaces in all townships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving the provision of information regarding play opportunities, locations and available facilities on site. ● Providing information on transport options to access play spaces, including public transport, active transport and available parking. ● Ensuring play spaces are well distributed across the municipality. ● Diversity of play experiences that consider different age groups and abilities. ● Improve feelings of safety through appropriate surveillance, particularly in historical spaces. ● Ensure pathways are clear and accessible for play space users.
Key issues to be considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location and proximity to other locations including home and aged care centres. ● Need for improved visibility and supervision through appropriate planning of seating and sight-lines. ● Access to facilities such as toilets, drinking water and shade (natural or constructed), dog facilities. ● Availability and opportunities to engage in risky play. ● Potential for negative environmental impacts associated with plastic under surfacing. ● Availability of age appropriate play and diversity of play opportunities. ● Provision of all abilities play equipment for both physical and intellectual needs. ● How to minimise the graffiti and vandalism of play equipment and spaces. ● Access to information on the location and available facilities at each play space. ● Diversity of planting to support smell and touch options at play spaces. ● Distribution of play spaces to include areas south of the river.

<p>How can play spaces and play opportunities be improved across the Shire?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing new spaces or upgrading existing play spaces to allow for a diversity of play experiences for all ages including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ space and activities for older kids and early teenagers ○ Casual spaces for teenagers to congregate ○ Incorporate music and lighting ○ Unstructured play opportunities ○ exploratory nature play ○ Parkour and climbing options ○ More challenging equipment for older age groups ● Create spaces that cater to those with dogs including appropriate space and equipment. ● Be considerate of facilities for those supervising play space users, such as adult exercise equipment, shade, seating, comfort, shelter, lines of sight. ● Activate spaces through installation of public art and colour. ● Incorporating technology into play spaces (charging stations, augmented reality machines). ● Improve requirements on developers to provide appropriate spaces in new subdivisions. ● Provide play opportunities close to home, within a 400 metre walking distance.
<p>Informing the community about play opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilise Council's website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interactive maps ○ List of play spaces within the municipality ○ Information regarding the availability of facilities on site ● Information sessions and distributed materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Drop in sessions ○ Information in the visitor centre ○ Maternal visits and home packs ○ Information in schools ○ Media releases ● Events and activations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Food, drink and coffee vans ○ Parachute play ○ Outdoor yoga sessions ○ Lawn games ● Social media promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facebook ○ Instagram
<p>Strategy's role in delivering and maintaining play spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist with future strategic work and provide justification for decision making. ● Prioritisation list and implementation plan for future play spaces and the upgrading of current play spaces. ● Improve community understanding of levels of service and frequency of maintenance. ● Delivering spaces for young people that support occasional activations. ● Provide more options for visitors and families and encourage return visitation through upgrades to existing facilities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interlock with the subdivision planning approval process to ensure inclusion of appropriate play spaces with new subdivisions
Support needed by staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular maintenance and improvement to existing maintenance.

Data source: Council staff Workshop

5.8 Community Workshop

A 90-minute online workshop was held on Thursday 2 November 2023 for representatives from selected community organisations and groups. Participants undertook a facilitated workshop to learn about the Play Space Strategy, discuss the interim findings of the engagement program and identify needs and challenges on behalf of those they were representing to determine solutions that could be implemented through the Strategy.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Provide participants with a clear understanding of what the Play Space Strategy is and what it is responsible for.
- Give a brief summary of the engagement findings to date.
- Identify the unique needs and challenges of each organisation and its members in relation to play.
- Determine solutions to identified needs and challenges.

There were a total of 12 participants in this exercise, from which data was collected via an interactive online product *Mentimeter*. Participants were able to enter their comments into the *Mentimeter* using their phones. The session's *Mentimeter* was left open for further input by participants for one week, closing on Thursday 9 November 2023.

Participants were asked to discuss:

- What are some of the unique needs and challenges of your organisation?
- How can these needs and challenges be addressed through local play spaces?

Table 14 below presents a summary of the needs, challenges and suggested solutions.

Table 14. Summary of feedback from Community Workshop

Workshop discussion item	Participant feedback
Needs and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of play experiences for the different age groups/needs of young people in Horsham. Some suggested causes include poor non-car infrastructure, lack of shaded, safe and private areas. Lack of knowledge of locations and what is available. Need to consider the natural environment as climate change and sustainability is a common focus of young people. Uneven distribution of play opportunities on either side of the river.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating spaces that can be utilised by community organisations for programming and promotion. • Need to cater to young, digitally minded, youth in both facilities and information. • Lack of consideration for those with sensory issues and feelings of safety. • No access to Mt Arapiles or the Grampians without a car.
How can these needs and challenges be supported through our local play spaces?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting teenagers through providing separated areas that allow for passive recreation, and partnering with services for programming and safety. • A better distribution of play spaces including areas both north and west sides of the river. • Supporting older people and those living with a disability through the use of appropriate undersurfacing including rubber soft fall and flat pathways and providing more for those with challenging behaviours. • Consider areas for more active recreation equipment and facilities including BMX, skate parks and table tennis tables. • Improving community knowledge of parks and their facilities by listing them online with supporting images. • More consideration for those with sensory needs, less prescriptive equipment, tactile and fidget play. • More signage and wayfinding at sites with information on other nearby areas. • Assess whether the facilities on site are appropriate including toilets, fencing and parking. • Consider access and travel time for those living outside of Horsham, provide play space and combined services for these areas. • Consider multi-use, multi-generational play and separated activity zones. • Integrate technology on-site including wifi and charging stations. • Provide access to climbing options while considering what the natural environment has on offer. • More seating and shaded areas to provide more opportunities for relaxation and social activities.

6. Feedback Summary and Next Steps

6.1 Summary of Feedback

The following feedback summary is drawn from the findings of the stakeholder consultation and community engagement conducted during October-November 2023. This feedback will be brought together with other research, site and planning analysis work also undertaken as part of this project to form a comprehensive set of strategic recommendations in the Play Spaces Review and Strategy report:

What the community values in play spaces

- Open spaces for children to run in and make up their own games
- Green grass/lawn and the clean, well-maintained sites
- A variety of play equipment/experiences that suit most age groups
- Shade
- Specific types of play equipment including; swings, slides, monkey bars, climbing equipment, water play.
- Natural materials for play including; water, sand, gardens (flowers)
- Being close to or in natural environments

Suggested improvements to encourage increased opportunities at existing play spaces

Key improvements suggested by local stakeholders and the community include:

- More variety or better-quality play equipment
- More or improved shelter (in particularly over play equipment) through planting suitable trees or shade structures
- Play spaces suitable for all ages (multi-generational) or considering the inclusion of opportunities for different age groups, especially more options for babies and toddlers 1-2 years, children aged 9-12 years and teenagers
- More seating, picnic tables and bins in sheltered locations to support social gathering
- A broader range of informal recreation or games, either integrated or in parallel with play equipment
- Improved toilet facilities that are suitable for everyone to use
- Accessibility for all abilities in play spaces, including sensory needs
- Accessibility for all abilities to and around play spaces, including paths, car parking, toilets, and other features
- Adjacent support businesses (such as cafes or the canteen near Adventure Island) which are able to sell drinks, food, sunscreen, nappies etc.
- Better, easier to access information on the different facilities at play spaces and ways to encourage trying different places to play (such as a map, directory on council website, fun games to explore different play spaces and signage)
- Pair play spaces up with complementary local events to activate

- Improved safety including better sightlines, fencing, more regular maintenance of graffiti and vandalism, lighting of paths and general surveillance

Suggested new play spaces

New sites or localities suggested by the community included:

- More new play spaces in general
- New developments (on residential estates)
- Horsham West
- Horsham North
- Horsham South-East (near Wimmera River)
- Telangatuk

Suggested upgrades / maintenance to play spaces

Existing sites suggested by the community for upgrade or maintenance included:

- Adventure Island
- Weir Park
- Uebergang Park
- Charisma Park
- Wavell Street Park
- Gardenia Street Park
- Horsham Botanic Gardens
- Haven
- Apex Park (improve shelter and fencing)
- Wimmera Water and Nature Play Park (fix broken water pump and add in fencing to river)

6.2 Further recommendations around engagement report

It is recommended as a next step that Council publishes and promotes this engagement report on the project page of Your Say to allow stakeholders and interested community members an opportunity to read the engagement feedback.

Council may also wish to provide an update on the project (and next steps) and promote this report across all suitable communication channels, whilst thanking participants involved for sharing their views and time.

The findings of this report should be referenced in the Horsham Play Space Review and Strategy Report.

7. Appendices (provided separately)

Appendix 1 : Specific play spaces and features that users like

Appendix 2 : Specific play spaces and their improvement ideas from users