CITY OF BALLARAT

BUNINYONG BOTANIC GARDENS

BUNINYONG BOTANIC GARDENS BATHS

Engagement Summary

Proudly working with and for our community



“Community engagement was designed to provide a range of opportunities for community members and stakeholders to learn about the project and provide feedback on the proposed concept plan”

Purpose of Engagement

The completion of the Bath Walls Restoration presented an opportunity to rejuvenate the Baths Garden and surrounding areas of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens while progressing priorities identified in the 2023 Buninyong Botanic Gardens Masterplan. The project proposed the redesign and replanting of the inner walled garden and renewal of the surrounding garden areas through new plantings and complementary landscape improvements.

Community engagement was undertaken to gather feedback on the draft concept plans and help inform the final design. The engagement sought to:

- Understand community views on the proposed garden design.
- Ensure the concept respected the heritage significance of the site.
- Identify elements of the garden that are valued and should be retained.
- Understand how the space is currently used and where improvements could be made.
- Share information about the site's history, the design approach and the vision outlined in the 2023 Masterplan.

Feedback was specifically sought on whether the proposed concept plan would:

- Respect the heritage character of the site.
- Meet current and future community needs.
- Create an attractive, functional and welcoming garden space.

The engagement helped ensure the final concept reflected community priorities while supporting the long-term revitalisation of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens.

Overview of What We Heard

Community engagement for the Buninyong Walled Garden focused on the proposed redesign and replanting of the inner and outer garden areas following completion of the Bath Walls Restoration. Community members were invited to review the draft concept plans and provide feedback through a range of engagement activities and channels.

Overall, feedback showed strong support for the proposed design and confidence in the project's direction. Community input helped refine several elements of the final concept plan, including:

- Reducing the extent of gravel surfaces and increasing lawn areas.
- Reviewing the location and width of the entrance hedge.
- Refining plant selections for the internal and external garden beds.
- Supporting the use of the space for weddings, small events and community gatherings.

How We Engaged

Community engagement was designed to provide a range of opportunities for community members and stakeholders to learn about the project and provide feedback on the proposed concept plan.

The City of Ballarat has a longstanding relationship with the Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens, therefore it was important to ensure we engaged with them directly to capture their views and comments through a tailored information session.

More than 70 community members and stakeholders participated directly through meetings, information sessions, school engagement activities and survey responses. Project information also reached a broader audience through MySay Ballarat, community signage, letters and stakeholder communications.

In-person engagement included:

- One information session with the Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens attended by 15 participants
- Two community drop-in sessions attended by approximately 20 participants
- Engagement with Buninyong Primary School, involving discussions with the Principal and feedback from eight students
- An online meeting with Heritage Victoria.

Online engagement included:

26 online survey responses.

586 visitors to the MySay Ballarat project page, during the engagement period.

Project information was shared through:

- Signage at the Buninyong Botanic Gardens and Baths Garden site
- The City of Ballarat website and MySay Ballarat
- Letterbox drops to nearby residents
- On-site concept display boards
- Direct communications with stakeholder groups, including the Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens, The Bard in Buninyong, Buninyong and District Historical Society, and the Buninyong & District Community Association.

In addition, seven written submissions were received via email.

The strong level of participation reflected the community's ongoing connection to the Buninyong Botanic Gardens and provided valuable local knowledge to help inform the final concept plan.

What We Heard

Feedback on the draft concept plan was overwhelmingly positive, with community members expressing strong support for the proposed redesign and its balance between heritage preservation, landscape renewal and future community use.

Several recurring themes emerged throughout the engagement process:

- Strong support for the overall design and garden concept
- A preference for increased lawn areas and reduced use of granitic sand where appropriate
- Support for the proposed planting palette and seasonal colour
- Interest in additional shade and canopy planting
- Support for additional seating and improved accessibility
- Support for weddings, small events and community gatherings within the space
- Interest in interpretive elements that celebrate the history of the site
- Recognition of the importance of long-term garden maintenance.

Community members also highlighted several considerations for the final design, including the ongoing maintenance of garden beds, appropriate levels of enclosure and security, and the design of the hedge entry and access points.

Overall, the feedback reinforced strong support for the project while identifying opportunities to further enhance the proposed design.

Closing the Loop & What's Next

Community feedback has confirmed strong support for the proposed concept plan and helped refine several aspects of the design. This input will continue to inform the project as it progresses through the next stage of planning and approvals.

The next phase of the project will focus on completing approvals, progressing detailed design work and preparing for implementation. A Heritage Victoria permit is required, and Heritage Victoria has been engaged throughout the development of the concept plan.

Next steps include:

- Finalising the Heritage Victoria permit process
- Completing detailed design, planning and procurement activities
- Continuing to keep stakeholders and the community informed of project progress
- Sharing project updates through MySay Ballarat, stakeholder communications, email updates and letterbox drops
- Providing updates to the Friends of Buninyong Botanic Gardens through scheduled committee meetings
- Communicating any future opportunities for public input through the Heritage Victoria public notification process, where required.

Closing Statement

The Buninyong Baths Garden project generated strong community interest and thoughtful feedback from people who care deeply about the future of the Buninyong Botanic Gardens. The engagement process provided valuable insight into community priorities and helped shape a concept plan that respects the site's heritage while enhancing its future use and enjoyment.

The City of Ballarat thanks everyone who participated in the engagement process. The feedback received has played an important role in refining the final concept plan and will continue to inform the successful delivery of the project.

CITY OF BALLARAT

BUNINYONG BOTANIC GARDENS

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