

PREAMBLE: *In June 2021 the Progress Association of Brown Hill decided it was time to initiate a community wide conversation concerning the future of Brown Hill's ageing community pool. With this in mind an initial concept for the redevelopment of the Brown Hill Reserve (which includes the pool complex) was developed to start this conversation. If/when the pool needed to close how could its legacy be enhanced for future Brown Hill generations?*

Before the Progress Association made any decisions, it needed to hear from Brown Hill residents to see what they thought about the future of the pool and reserve. The primary vehicle chosen to gather their feedback was an online survey. The survey was open from mid-July to the end of August (six weeks). The following outlines the outcome of this engagement.

To ensure that all residents were aware of the survey and reasons behind it a Special Edition of the Brown Hill Community Newsletter was published and delivered to all ~2,500 households in Brown Hill in mid-July. The Special Edition of the Brown Hill Community Newsletter can be accessed online at Brown Hill Community Hub site: www.brownhill.vic.au/brown-hill-progress-association

*Brendan Stevens
Secretary, BHPA*

FEEDBACK GATHERING

Different ways residents could provide feedback

The **online survey** was the primary vehicle for feedback. A QR code for the survey was distributed widely to provide easy access to the survey. As not all residents are able to access online surveys or feel comfortable doing so, a number of other options were made available for them to provide their comments. **Options were:** the back page of the newsletter was left blank for feedback to be provided and returned via the Brown Hill Hall letterbox; by email; by phone; by post; paper copies of the online survey were also made available. All comments received have been incorporated into the final collation of feedback.

It was the intention to hold at least one or possibly two **community get-togethers** at the reserve during the six-week period where a presentation of the situation could be provided and the redevelopment concept discussed as an open forum for residents to have their say. However, with the unpredictability of COVID restrictions this did not happen. Also, another casualty of COVID restrictions were planned **meetings with community groups and schools**.

Encouragement and Reminders

As face-to-face encounters were severely limited due to COVID restrictions other means were needed to encourage and remind people that their input was important. Posters were displayed in local shops but the greatest assistance came from half a dozen **Facebook** users

that regularly placed a post on their sites throughout the six weeks, including the BHPA Facebook page.

Keeping informed

All information about the redevelopment concept is available on the **Brown Hill Community Hub** website: <https://www.brownhill.vic.au/brown-hill-progress-association/>
Further updates will also be provided through the Community Newsletter.

Councillors

Prior to the community feedback phase all Councillors were notified of what the Progress Association was thinking about and invited to attend individual walk-arounds of the reserve to obtain further details. Neither Councillors or Council Officers were involved with the survey.

SURVEY RESPONSES AND OTHER FEEDBACK

*The purpose of the feedback phase was to find out what people had to say therefore the survey provided several opportunities for them to respond. This they did with a final collation of comments filling 23 pages. The list will be available for viewing on the Community Hub. **This survey therefore needs to be seen more as a qualitative survey rather than just quantitative.***

Even though the primary target group of the survey were residents (households) of Brown Hill, it is also apparent that many users of the pool and reserve came from further afield, in particular the suburbs bordering Brown Hill. It was therefore important to include their feedback as well. Except for question 2, all figures are based on responders, who are both Brown Hill residents and other pool and reserve users, who felt strongly enough to complete the survey.

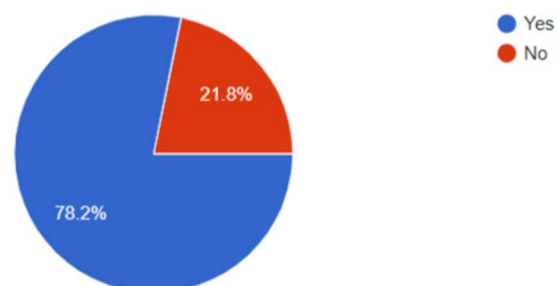
At the close of the survey, at the end of August, all comments were collated into one document with the majority of comments received in other formats being entered under question 21. The number of comments received through the survey were 344 and 16 through other formats (total 360). Comments were also received from the Brown Hill Lions Club; Brown Hill Uniting Church; Brown Hill Kindergarten; and Caledonian Primary School (verbal)

QUESTION 1: Are you a Brown Hill Resident?

There were 330 respondents to the survey. Of these responders, 258 (78.2%) were residents of Brown Hill, with the remaining 72 (21.8%) tending to be residents of nearby suburbs who use the pool and reserve.

Are you a Brown Hill resident?

330 responses



QUESTION 2: If you are not a resident of Brown Hill, could you tell us why are you interested in the pool and/or reserve? (open question)

Other than living nearby (Black Hill, Nerrina, Warrenheip, Ballarat East); extended family live in BH; BH closest urban area; most convenient play/recreation area; grew up in BH; attend school in BH.

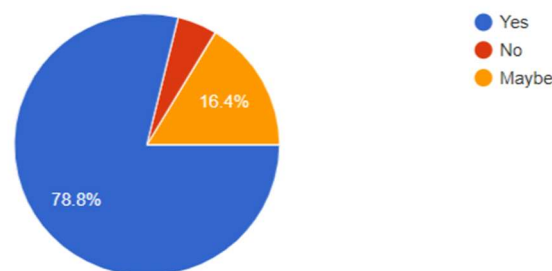
QUESTION 3: If the Brown Hill pool needs to be closed, are you in favour of a redevelopment of the whole reserve?

Qualifying statement in survey: The Brown Hill pool is 80 years old and is well past the life expectancy of 50 years for most community pools. The cost involved to keep it maintained and functioning are reaching a point where council will no longer be able to justify the expense.

This question was to provide an overview of support or otherwise for the concept of redevelopment of the reserve. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents, 260 (78.8%) were in favour; with 54 (16.4%) responding as a maybe, and 16 (4.8%) not in favour.

If the Brown Hill pool needs to be closed, are you in favour of a redevelopment of the whole of the reserve?

330 responses



QUESTION 4: Are you happy to fill in the rest of the survey?

This question provided respondents an opportunity to provide their support or otherwise, in general, for the redevelopment concept without having to complete the full survey. There were 7 that exited early¹.

Questions 5 & 6 were to establish basic demographic information.

¹ These 7 provided their comments in other formats

QUESTION 5: What age group are you in?

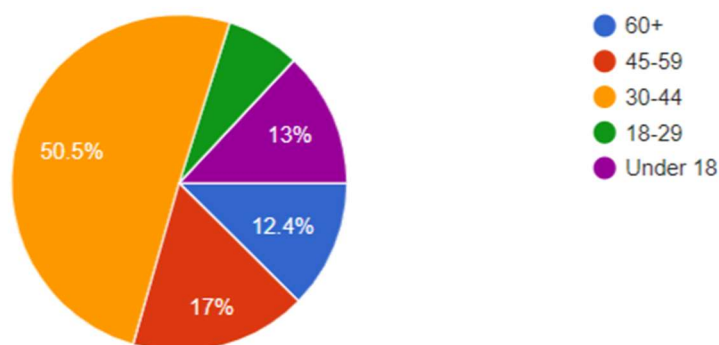
Over 50% (163) of respondents were within the 30-44 age group. With the least represented 18-29 (23) age group. This 30-44 age group could be seen to primarily represent families with young children, which would be the main family group

using the pool/ reserve. School age children, represented by the “under 18” age group, who should be regarded as the primary users of a redeveloped reserve, were encouraged to participate in the survey.² The 13% (42) response is a positive result.³

Age group	Number responded	Percent of responders
Under 18	42	13.0%
18-29	23	7.1%
30-44	163	50.5%
45-59	55	17.0%
60+	40	12.4%

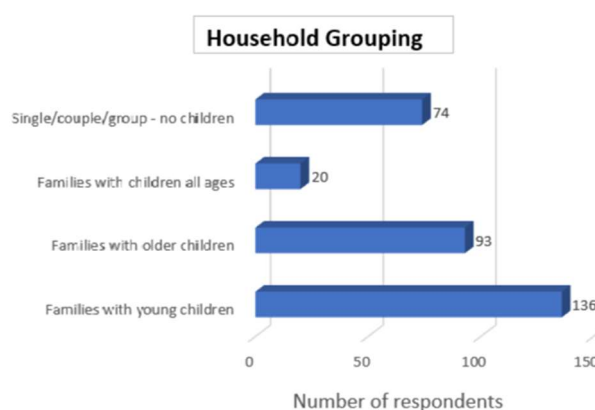
Which age group are you in?

323 responses



QUESTION 6: Which grouping would your household primarily fit into?

Overwhelmingly households of families with children were the dominant household groupings; with families with children under the age of eight with 136 responding and families with older children and/or teenagers 93 responding. This is not surprising as they would be the dominant groups to access pool & reserve for children’s activities.

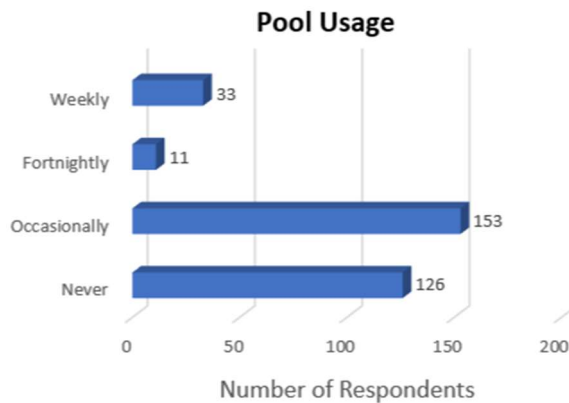


² Children are often forgotten as respondents to a survey as it is perceived that only adults would participate and not children

³ Caledonian PS held a survey session with senior students; Woodman’s Hill Secondary School were also planning a similar session but unfortunately COVID lockdown prevented this from happening.

Question 7: How often do you use the pool when it is open?

Only ~10% of responders used the pool on a weekly basis - when it was open. Considering that occasional, and never users constitute almost 90% of the responses, it's fair to say that there is very little frequent usage of the pool.



Many comments (question 10) were received regarding pool usage, here is a sample:

With little children we have not visited the pool in recent years as the toddler pool has been closed, and the water is far too cold. But we would LOVE a pool that was heated somehow and had a toddler area.

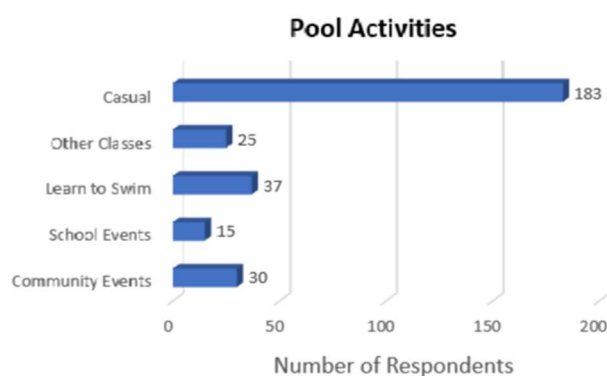
I love the idea of the pool, but the reality was, I'd try Eureka as it had warmer water and opening hours that suited a morning swim. This past summer, the writing was on the wall when Council didn't open up on the hottest days of the year - which are the only days we can take the cold, cold water!

We loved the pool when it was community ran and used it a lot.

We would use the pool more in summer but the facility is dated and our children complain that the water is colder than other facilities.

QUESTION 8: If you use the pool, what activities do you, or your family members engage in?

When examining the activities engaged in by those that do use the pool, the majority of use was for casual visits.

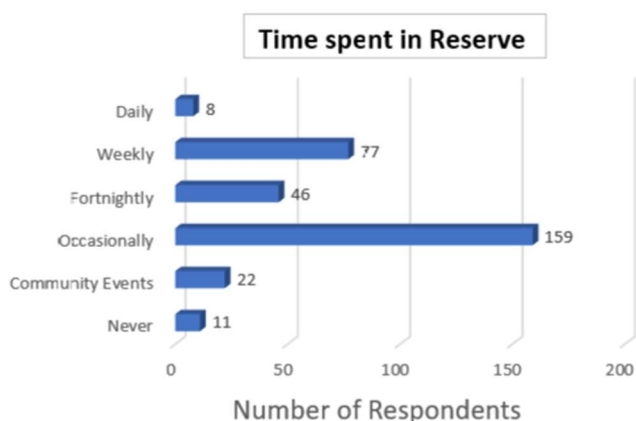


Comment from Caledonian School:

The school hasn't used the pool for regular programs for a number of years – too cold, outdated facilities. Caledonian and many other schools now primarily use commercial facilities – indoor, heated, can book school only times, always staff available.

QUESTION 9: How often do you spend time at the reserve? This does not include cricket oval events.

There appears to be a regular use of the reserve with most respondents using the reserve on an occasional basis (159); weekly (77) or fortnightly (46). A number of comments highlight the playground and Wallaby Track, often in combination.



Comments (question 10) were received regarding playground and Wallaby Track/Yarrowee Trail, here is a sample:

We use the walking track and playground casually but would use it much more if it had better facilities and was more attractive to children

We use the reserve to play on the playground and walk the dogs and access the Yarrowee river trail

COVID has increased the usage of this area. I've lived here my whole life and this is the busiest I've seen the reserve and the Yarrowee trail.

I have two young kids and we often, use the walking track and then do a stint at the playground.

Other comments (question 10) were received regarding reserve usage, here is a sample:

I live close by the reserve and often see elderly walkers, carers and their wards, young mothers and babies walking through and enjoying the reserve.

Walks with grandkids and Parkrun. Always looking for water and toilets.

Use the playground and tracks with grandchildren. Use area for exercise and picnics.

We enjoy going to the oval for a kick of the footy and using the playground

I also take disabled clients to the reserve weekly to go for a safe walk in a relaxing atmosphere. We then have a BBQ lunch there. I'd hate to lose the use of BBQ and the lovely relaxing atmosphere of the reserve

Questions 11 to 16 were related to the future of the pool and pool site

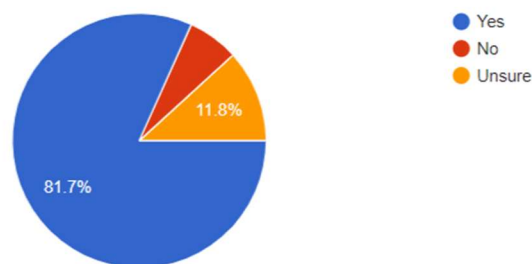
QUESTION 11: Would you support the closure of the pool if there was a possibility of having a new pool in the future?

Qualifying statement in survey: Suggestions have been put forward that if the pool closes, and is replaced with a splash park, the site could be designed to allow for reinstatement of a new pool in the future. Please note there is no guarantee that building a new pool will be feasible, this is a hypothetical question.

The majority of responders were in favour of the pool closing if there was a possibility of having a pool in the future. Yes: 264 (81.7%); No: 21 (6.5%); Unsure: 38 (11.8%). This

Would you support the closure of the pool if there was a possibility of having a new pool in the future?

323 responses



favourable response indicating that if the pool was to close then any use of the site post-pool, should be so designed to allow for reinstatement of a new pool in the future. Comments also support a preference for the Brown Hill community to have a pool, however this does not mean the current pool in its current state.

Many comments (question 13) were received regarding future of pool, here is a sample:

It's sad that we could potentially lose the pool, Eureka is far too crowded, kids need to be able to swim and have a space to practice. Both options would be good.

Understand that pools are expensive. Black Hill pool is very close by

If the Pool goes a new one would be great, I feel it is too small and very old fashion I feel Brown Hill is growing and it needs revamping to a more modern pool and an area for bigger gatherings

If the pool were to be replaced, a small indoor heated pool would serve a wider cross-section of the community, and would be able to be used year-round.

Why the hell should my rates pay so you people can be compensated? Get in into your heads UTILISE EUREKA POOL!!!

Although I don't use the pool myself, it's an important community resource for this side of town. We have so little over here as it is and the permanent removal of the pool is not good for the community.

Keeping the pool would be good, but it is old and dated. A new pool or splash park would be loved by the community.

I love we have a local pool. But Ballarat's weather isn't fantastic, but also the pool is known to be freezing and the grounds are not very appealing.

The existing pool doesn't offer what the community needs, with less maintenance and opening hours we have all seen the change since the council took over the pool and the culture changed with it too.

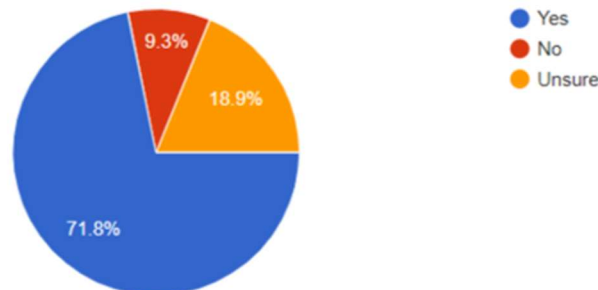
QUESTION 12: If Council decided to close the pool would you expect the community to be compensated for its loss?

Qualifying statement in survey: This question relates to a post-pool future for the potential loss of a valued community asset.

The majority of respondents 232 (71.8%) were in favour of the above statement, with 30 (9.3%) not in favour.

If Council decided to close the pool would you expect the community to be compensated for its loss?

323 responses



Many comments (question 13) were received regarding compensation for loss of pool, here is a sample:

Regarding the idea of 'compensation' for the Brown Hill community if the pool were to be closed: I'm not sure the future construction of a new pool would be justified, given Black Hill and Eureka pools are not far away. However, I think the local area should be compensated by having some form of recreational facility replace the existing pool.

It would be wonderful for the community to have improved infrastructure/equipment at the reserve to compensate for the loss of the pool and its recreational activities

If the council close the pool, I think they should (must) put some other recreational equipment in place, the people (children especially) of Brown Hill, are just as important as those in the "newer" areas.

The existing pool is a privilege, not a right. The cost for any 'compensation' comes from council funds which is basically our rates.

Brown Hill needs a place where the community can get together and if the pool is removed, it needs to be replaced with a similar community asset.

We would like to see the Ballarat Council put more thought into the continuing improvement of facilities on the Eastern side of town. Brown Hill has experienced a rapid rate of residential growth but very little improvement in surrounding infrastructure.

QUESTION 14: Do you want to retain the existing pool, no matter what?

Over 50% (184) did not wish to retain the existing pool, no matter what; only 14.2% (46) wanted the pool retained, while the remainder were unsure.

For the 46 who wanted to retain the pool they then were asked the following two questions.

QUESTION 15 & 16: Would you be willing to take an active role in finding solutions to retain the pool? Would you be willing to take an active role in maintaining the pool?

Response	Would you be willing to take an active role in finding solutions to retain the pool?	Would you be willing to take an active role in maintaining the pool?
Yes	19	20
No	6	10
Maybe	21	16

Of the 46 responders who wanted to retain the pool no matter what, fewer than half were willing to take an active role in helping to retain or maintain the existing pool. It may not be important how many people are willing to be involved, as it's possible that only a few motivated and active people are all that's needed. Bear in mind though that these individuals are in the minority of responders, the majority did not wish to retain the existing pool no matter what.

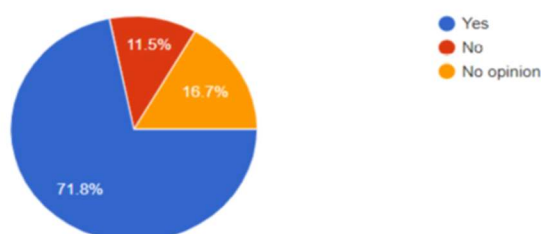
Questions 17 to 20 were related specifically to redevelopment features

QUESTION 17: Do you think that any redevelopment proposal needs to maintain the overall style of the reserve?

Qualifying statement in survey: The main feature of the reserve other than its beautiful trees, is the rotunda and b-b-q with their 'top-hat' style roofs. It is proposed to keep this theme throughout the reserve along with complementing its natural setting

A majority of respondents 71.8% (232), were supportive of maintaining the overall style of the reserve as outlined; 16.7% (54) had no opinion either way and 11.5% (37) were not supportive.

Do you think that any redevelopment proposal needs to maintain the overall style of the reserve?
323 responses



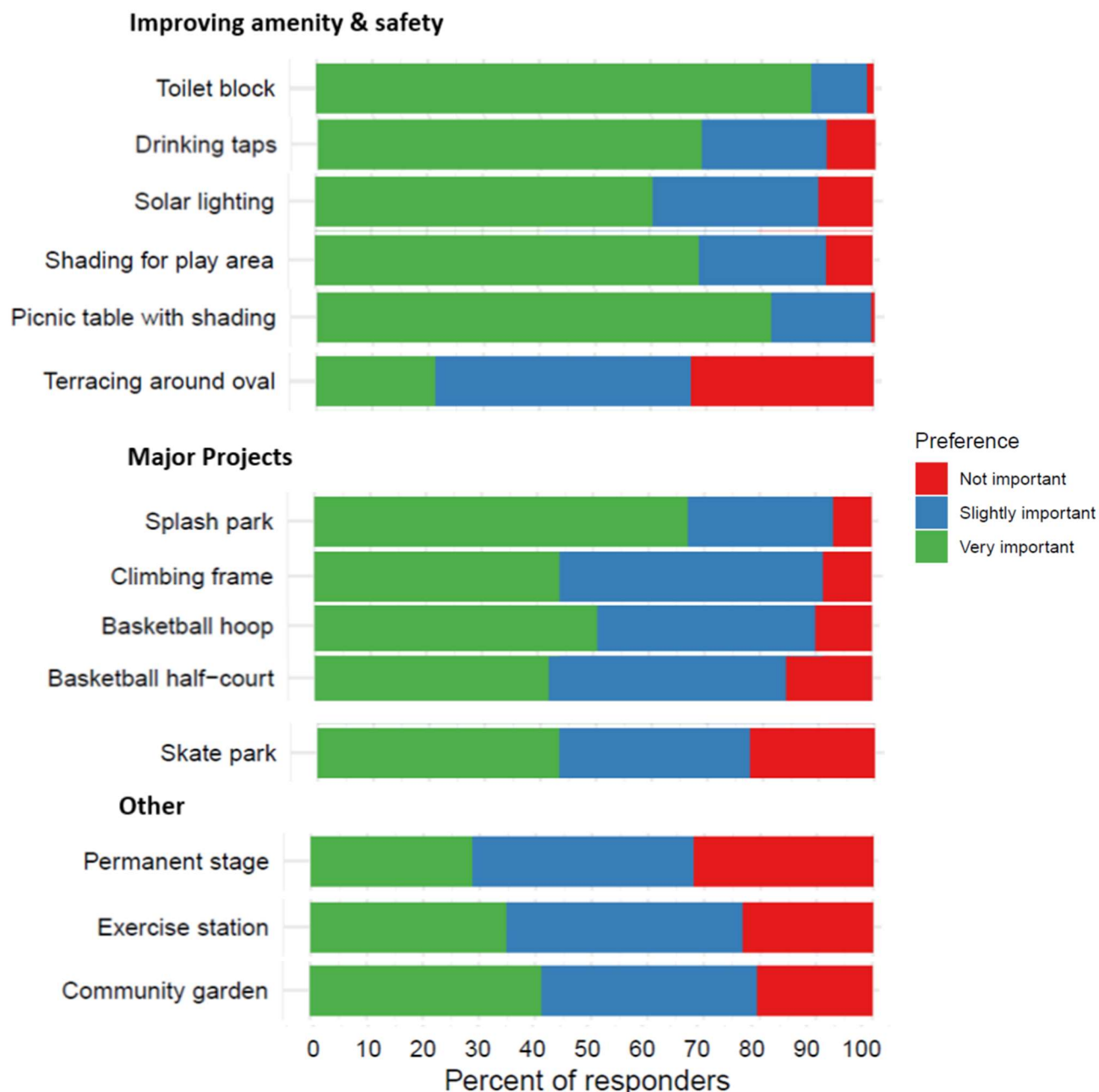
QUESTION 18: Listed below are the proposed features of the redevelopment, please indicate how important each aspect is to you.

Qualifying statement in survey: Answers here will assist in prioritizing features for the different stages of redevelopment. Refer to centerfold in Special Edition Community Newsletter

Different features that could be included in the redevelopment of the reserve, were listed and respondents were asked to rank each feature as 'Not important', 'Slightly important', or 'Very important'.

The clearest preferences were for the addition of a toilet block and picnic tables with shading, features which were also the least contentious. Drinking taps, shading for the play area, solar lighting for the reserve, and replacing the pool with a splash park were also important to the majority of responders. The rest of the proposed features had mixed responses.

Features in categories with preferences and related comments



Improving Amenity and safety

Sample of comments received

Toilet block

My major concern is that the layout of any toilet block must ensure there is ease of access for disabled with enough room for carers as well; change tables for babies & toddlers; disability group needs to be consulted on any design.

Requires a toilet block closer by. Hard to take a child that is toilet training that far to the cricket oval. We live in Gracefield Rd and there are no playgrounds with toilets near us or close to our home.

Toilet block to be designed to cater for the general public out walking and a divided wall be built for showers and toilets for the use of pool patrons. We should be thinking big.

Picnic table with shading/shading for play area

Not enough seating to watch children play on equipment.

Keep play equipment natural, appreciate what nature can provide and utilise it. Minimise the plastic in playgrounds.

Fencing please for young kids near the creek and road, and some space to park bikes too I think a multi-purpose playground would be great like other suburbs have developed in Ballarat. ie: big slides and playground, small climbing wall, half basketball court.

Brown Hill Lions Club- points of interest:

Stage area to the side of Hall with accessible power points; accessible power at Rotunda; water Fountains throughout the Reserve area – drinking water; outside toilet – or access to Toilet Facilities within the Hall; the idea of a Water/Splash Park that could be multipurpose as a flat area for games during winter months; more seating around Reserve.

Major projects

Splash park precinct: Sample of comments received

Splash park is a great idea, but if the pool is not included in the redevelopment project, then I think it will never come back, which would be a real shame. It was already greatly missed last summer.

Our family love the idea of a splash park as our young kids regularly use the one in Ballarat North so one that is much closer would be fantastic. (Note: many similar comments) I think the pool is outdated and the site could be used for a more friendly site ie splash pool The pool space would work well as a splash park and therefore could be multi-use over the different seasons as we all know that its only hot summer for a few months of the year. In the cooler months, a half basketball court, skating area or a nature playground could be incorporated.

It will be a tragedy for future residents if we don't fight for our pool. The water "parks" are a disgrace.

The basketball half court would be good for the children but the location needs some more thought. Could it be part of the possible splash park area?

I would like a skate park and a picnic area

I would rather see the basketball half court be up where C is.

Half-court basketball – excellent idea. We need an area promoting activity and family participation.

Skate Park: Sample of comments received

I understand that a skate park would be good for the older children and teenagers but it would be better located in a more suitable area north of the freeway where there are no such activities for children.

I think we definitely need to think to the future and what kids enjoy doing! A skate park, splash zone, basketball court etc, they are the things that will get families back out and involved in the community. We have none of those things over this side of town, and let's face it, we're only growing!

The idea of a skatepark and or pump track is a great idea as it is something every member of my family and many friends in Brown Hill would use particularly a pump track.

I do not wish for a concrete jungle skatepark and nor do my teenagers.

I wouldn't put a skatepark in the reserve, because skateparks are noisy. Instead it would be great to have a bike track, similar to the Creswick Pump Track which is very popular with kids.

Not keen on the skate park – sorry!

I'm a skater myself so would love a skate park to use, but I also know that skate parks become very busy and I don't like that idea.

Other

Permanent stage: Sample of comments received

Understand the difficulty in organising community events e.g. Brown Hill Community Festival, where a temporary stage is required. To have a permanent stage would be an advantage for whenever a community/school group would wish to hold a wider community event. Caledonian Primary School

I could definitely see us utilizing a stage area, as this would be a great resource during Mother's Day, Father's Day and Christmas time. Brown Hill Kindergarten

Communal Garden area: Sample of comments received

Community gardens - especially vegetable patches - maybe family zones - once again if well thought and planned, they build community engagement as well as environmental awareness and healthier humans - mentally and physically. Native plantings - showcase the diverse and beautiful range of native plants we have - "grow" awareness

NOTE: Several comments related to dogs

I hope that the council will listen to the residents. We need a fenced dog park in Brown Hill as there are a number of us that walk dogs in the reserve plus more waste bins and waste bags for the dogs. There are plenty of places in the reserve where one could be established.

Dog poo bin would be great. The reserve and the Yarrowee Trail have become an absolute dog toilet over the last few months, it's so disgusting.

Respondent numbers per preference (green indicates the highest number of preferences for a specific feature)

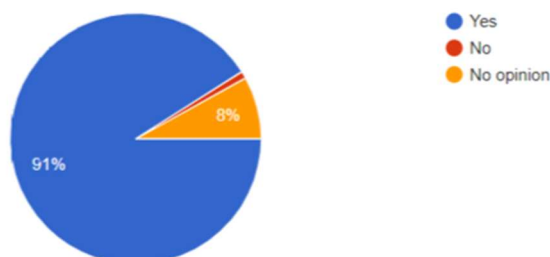
Feature	Very Important	Slightly important	Not important
Improving amenity & safety			
Toilet block	282	32	4
Drinking taps	218	71	28
Solar lighting	190	94	31
Terracing	65	140	100
Shading playground	150	72	26
Picnic table & shading	259	57	0
Major Projects			
Splash park precinct			
Splash park	213	83	22
Climbing frames	134	144	27
Basketball hoop	159	123	32
Basketball ½ court	129	132	48
Skate Park	136	108	71
Other			
Permanent stage	88	122	99
Adult exercise stations	107	130	72
Communal garden	127	119	64

QUESTION 19: Would you be in favour of a completion of the reserve's redevelopment before the end of 2023?

Qualifying statement in survey: The reserve will be 120 years old in 2023. The completion of works in 2023 would therefore be a fitting timeline to celebrate the reserve's 120th anniversary.

Respondents overwhelmingly were in favour 91% (294) of a 2023 celebration anniversary.

Would you be in favour of a completion of the reserve's redevelopment before the end of 2023?
323 responses



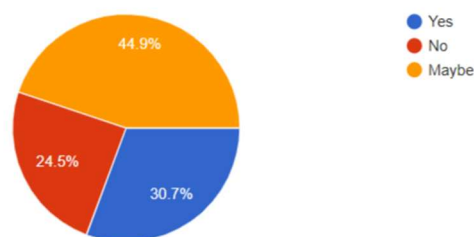
QUESTION 20: Would you be interested in being involved with the redevelopment of the reserve?

Interest in being involved was mixed, possibly implying that they needed far more detail in exactly what involvement meant.

Respondents were divided:

MAYBE: 145 (44.9%)
YES: 99 (30.7%)
NO: 79 (24.5%)

Would you be interested in being involved with the redevelopment of the reserve?
323 responses



Willingness to be involved in redevelopment of the reserve, by age group

	Under 18	18 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 59	60+
Yes	9 (21.4%)	7 (30.4%)	47 (28.8%)	18 (32.7%)	18 (45.0%)
No	13 (31.0%)	6 (26.1%)	41 (25.2%)	13 (23.6%)	6 (15.0%)
Maybe	20 (47.6%)	10 (43.5%)	75 (46.0%)	24 (43.6%)	16 (40.0%)

QUESTION 21: Allowed respondents to say whatever they wished.

The vast majority of comments were positive, with a range of ideas put forward. There was also a small number of responders expressing strong sentiment about the possibility of the pool closing.

The following is a small sample of comments received: these are in regard to the redevelopment concept in the context of the broader Brown Hill future.

As the local Uniting Church, we aim to provide spiritual, physical and emotional support to members of the Brown Hill community and surrounding suburbs. We would therefore support any initiative by the Brown Hill Progress Association which would enhance local facilities and improve the lifestyle of our community. Brown Hill Uniting Church Council

Our school would be able to use this a lot more during the year. We have a lot of new housing in Brown Hill and this would be an added attraction to the area for current and future residents. Anonymous comment through survey

Your plans look great, and thank you for highlighting publicly that the pool is nearing end of useful life, and for being on the front foot for our community in having plans for 'compensation' by council if/when it comes to that.

Great opportunity to see Council allocate some resources to a developing area. Brown Hill is a long-standing suburb which seems to have been neglected in a number of areas in recent years. While we do not want the density of development as in the west the area has proven popular with (it would seem) an increase in young families and young people as well as older residents.

It is imperative that the semi-rural feel is maintained and important assets such as the park (a central meeting point for the suburb) and Yarrowee trail/creek area are protected and upgraded/maintained to cater for resident needs.

This is a really great idea! We don't want our council closing down public pools, but we do want our council to upgrade community facilities across ALL areas of Ballarat - not just within the state government "growth zones".

Let's build upon the reserve foundations from its existing 120 years (or nearly) and set up the Brown Hill community with a wonderful asset that meets current and future needs better, is flexible and stands the test of time for the next 120 years. Brown Hill has a wonderful community feel, let's have the reserve be something that we can be even prouder of!

There are a high number of young families in Brown Hill. New amenities need to meet the needs for the future of residents. Infrastructure for teenagers would be a great benefit. Whilst a pool is useful, what is more important is that the whole reserve is optimised as a community space that serves everyone across the seasons.

The following is a small sample of comments received; these are in regard to some "words of caution"

Brown Hill has always held attraction to its residents because of its picturesque natural surroundings. Aside from the redevelopment of the pool site, it would be beneficial if any change to the reserve was sensitive to this. Large amounts of concrete and steel, such as a skate park, would detract from the natural landscape.

Please think of the space as an inclusive space to welcome people of all ages. Ensure that the redevelopment has something for younger and older children, where families and friends can gather, where the larger community can gather and the planning reflects accessibility for everyone.

We need community assets. Don't sell us out. The Council has significant rate payers increase in revenue in our area. We should capitalize on this. The pool has cost the council no money for many, many years. Community assets should be increased and outdoor activity promoted.

QUESTION 22: If you would like to be kept informed please enter your email address:

110 respondents indicated they wished to be kept informed of developments.

END OF SURVEY QUESTIONS