

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

PORTARLINGTON COMMUNITY FACILITIES STUDY

FINAL ENGAGEMENT REPORT
MAY 2023

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Introduction

This project aims to ensure that community facilities in Portarlinton are planned to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Commencing in 2021, The Portarlinton Community Facilities Study ('the Study') considers assessment of current conditions, demographics, stakeholder input and broad community consultation to provide recommendations for the provision of future community facilities.

ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE

Two phases of engagement were undertaken to inform the Study.

In the first phase we wanted to capture a wholesome outlook of the strengths, challenges, barriers and opportunities. To do so, we sought to understand:

- The type of facilities and services currently available to the community.
- How the existing network of facilities and services are being used.
- What is required to meet the current and future needs of the community.

The full findings of Phase 1 are available at Appendix B of the Portarlinton Community Facilities Study.

The second phase was focused on seeking feedback on the draft Study; we wanted to understand if the recommendations reflected community needs and if there were any additional components that we needed to consider.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarises the engagement throughout the project and how feedback has influenced the final Study.

This report consolidates the feedback received from the community through the engagement process, as well as feedback received from the Project Reference Group.

The information contained in this report is intended to 'close the loop' with community members and stakeholders that contributed to the engagement process.



Image 1: Portarlinton Preschool, Newcombe Street



Image 2: Portarlinton Parks Hall, Newcombe Street.



Image 3: Pavilion at Portarlinton Recreation Reserve.

How we engaged

The two community engagement phases spanned a total of 142 days throughout 2022.

Our core engagement activities were conducted via the Have Your Say online platform and were supplemented by stakeholder meetings, Project Reference Group meetings and in-person drop-in sessions.

The engagement was promoted via many channels, including a postcard letterbox drop, direct emails to community groups and project page followers, posters displayed around town, two media releases, the local Facebook page and email tree, and a column in the Port Report.



48

Online written submissions



195

Surveys completed



3600

Postcards delivered to residents



38

Direct emails to community groups



236

Online contributions



22

Key stakeholder meetings



49

People following the project



21

Click throughs via the Community Engagement newsletter



22

Community drop-in attendees



3

Project Reference Group meetings

Engagement details

Have Your Say online platform An online 'Have Your Say' project page was designed to share relevant information to encourage community feedback and continues to be updated as the project progresses.

First published on 9 March 2022, the page has received 2358 views and as 49 registered followers.

Survey (online and hardcopy) Two surveys have been conducted; the first in phase one engagement and the second in phase two engagement. The survey was available on online via the Have Your Say page and/or in hard copies if required.

The first survey was available 9 March 2022 to 11 April 2022 and attracted 167 respondents. The survey was primarily targeted towards the broader local community to identify current behaviours and provide opportunity to recommend solutions to barriers and challenges. The survey was completed anonymously and captured demographic and sentiment data including age, location, residence type and family structure.

The second survey was available 9 November 2022 to 9 December 2022 and attracted 28 respondents. The survey was again primarily targeted to the broader local community and sought to understand what about the draft Study excited them and opportunities to provide written feedback. Respondents could choose whether to answer anonymously or provide their name/representative community group.

Written submissions Both phases of engagement encouraged community to provide feedback via a written submission form on the Have Your Say page. 30 submissions were received throughout phase one, and 18 submissions were received in phase two.

Key stakeholder meetings Stakeholder meetings were held at various times from December 2021 to December 2022, either online or in-person.

Drop-in sessions Community members were invited to share feedback with the project team in-person by attending two drop-sessions; the first formed part of phase one engagement and was held on 18 March 2022 at Parks Hall, it was attended by four people. The second session (phase two engagement) was held on 19 November 2022 at St Andrews Uniting Church Hall and was attended by 22 community members.

Communications Throughout the project, a contact phone number and email address were also made available to ensure that anyone could relay feedback or make enquiries at any time direct to the project team.

Who we engaged

Various services and programs are delivered from community facilities in Portarlington, which means they are accessed by a wide range of community members for many reasons.

Therefore, it was just as important to speak to the broader community as well as established community. In total, 284 people participated in the engagement process with 84.5 per cent engaging online, and 15.5 per cent engaging in-person.

Overall, the engagement reached a representative sample of the intended target audience and reached both the general community and representative community groups.

COMMUNITY GROUP ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder meetings were undertaken with the following groups:

- Bellarine Agricultural Society
- Bellarine Bayside
- Bellarine Community Health
- Bellarine Historical Society
- Bellarine Women's Network
- Bethany Kindergarten Services
- Geelong Regional Library Corporation
- Maltese Pensioner's Group
- Portarlington Community Booth

Additionally, the following organisations were represented in the Project Reference Group:

- National Celtic Festival
- Portarlington Community Association (sub-committee)
- Portarlington Cricket Club
- Portarlington Football Netball Club
- Portarlington Neighbourhood House
- Portarlington Primary School
- Portarlington Senior Citizens
- Port Arts
- St Andrews Uniting Church



Image 4: Mural at Parks Hall, Portarlington

COMMUNITY SURVEY #1

Key findings of the survey conducted in phase one engagement includes:

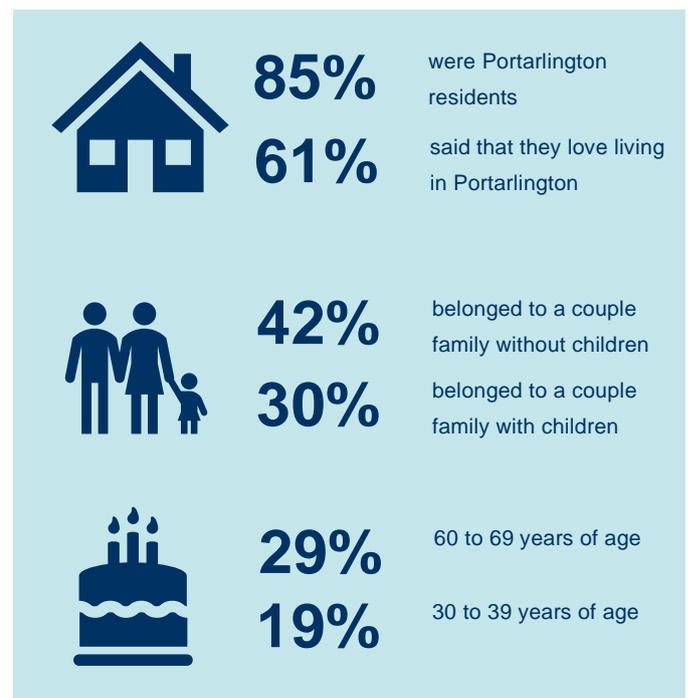


Figure 1: Demographic snapshot from Community Survey #1

What we heard

The feedback we received was representative of the community's views and aspirations for the facilities and, importantly, their views on the draft Study.

All feedback was analysed to identify key themes and issues to be resolved in the final Study.

Ultimately, community facilities that are local, accessible and multipurpose in design are important to the Portarlington community; and it is acknowledged that the facilities are used for a variety of different events and activities.

Feedback received throughout both phase one and two engagement periods has been grouped into the following four key themes:

1. Upgrading existing facilities – includes consideration of a brand-new purpose-built hub.
2. Connectivity and amenities.
3. Portarlington Neighbourhood House.
4. Arts & socialisation.

KEY THEMES

Across all forms of feedback, there has been a lively response to the draft Study, with many respondents having views on a variety of different aspects of the analysis and recommendations.

Key themes and considerations have been determined, which also incorporate sub-themes to capture the conversation across all feedback received.

KEY THEME 1 – UPGRADING EXISTING FACILITIES

Support for upgrades to existing community facilities located in Portarlington was a consistent theme in the feedback.

When considering what these improvements would entail, various sub-theme's emerged: the need for a brand-new community purpose-built community hub, improvements to accessibility and functionality, the impact of development on open space and the role of Parks Hall.

Sub-Theme – A purpose-built Community Hub?

There was mixed sentiment within the community regarding whether a new purpose-built Community Hub is

required or whether upgrades to the existing facilities would meet community needs.

There was no clear community preference demonstrated; some community members advocate for a new purpose-built Community Hub to provide a 'one stop shop' for services and programs, while others like diversity of place and are supportive of existing facilities being upgraded to better suit programming needs. Some submissions advocated for improvements to existing facilities in the short term, with a new community hub the preference in the long term.

“All existing halls in the town should be upgraded so they can be used by more people/groups. Activities should be spread out around the town to reduce traffic congestion.”

“We believe that our vibrant, increasingly popular, and growing township warrants the construction of a new purpose-built Community Hub, similar to those that have been provided for other Bellarine settlements and within the metropolitan area of the municipality.”

“A Community Hub will strengthen community identity and cohesion, continuing to build a vibrant and healthy community as the population of Portarlington grows.”



Image 5: Senior Citizens Centre, Newcombe Street

Sub-Theme – Accessibility and functionality

Regardless of the infrastructure response (new community hub or improving existing facilities), improvements to accessibility to ensure equitable access for people of all

ages and abilities was a strong and important feedback theme.

This is relative to the facilities themselves in meeting modern OHS and compliance requirements, as well as improvement in spaces to ensure that they are more inviting and fit for purpose for those that use them now and into the future.

“A community space that caters for the needs of all age groups, that is flexible and accessible is really needed. Accessed by smaller and larger groups for a variety of purposes.”

Sub-Theme – Impact on open space

It was acknowledged through the feedback that two of Portarlington’s greatest assets are the views to the foreshore and the abundance of open space; as demonstrated throughout the engagement, these characteristics are highly valued by the community.

When considering upgrades to infrastructure, some within the community advocate for improving the built form relationship to the open space and foreshore (i.e. larger windows, entertainment spaces, expansion of building footprints) and some are more protective of open space retention.

“Any upgrades to facilities should be undertaken in line with the small town / community nature of Portarlington and the desire of many residents to retain this aspect of their community.”

Sub-Theme – Parks Hall

The importance of Parks Hall to the community for events and programs was highlighted in feedback, particularly as the home of Portarlington Neighbourhood House.

It is acknowledged by some respondents that Parks Hall currently acts as the ‘Community Hub’ for Portarlington and that they would support upgrades to strengthen this, making it more functional for various community uses.

“Parks Hall needs to be more user friendly to accommodate all of the groups using it.”

“The most feasible place for any future development of a Community Hub is immediately adjacent to, or an extension of Parks Hall.”

“A new Parks Hall building should open up to the spectacular views it currently turns it back on and be made available for festivals and pop ups.”



Image 6: Entrance at Parks Hall, Newcombe Street

KEY THEME 2 – CONNECTIVITY AND AMENITIES

A significant amount of feedback was received throughout both engagement phases on connectivity and supporting amenities around the Portarlington township. This includes footpaths to encourage active transport and connections between facilities, as well as number and proximity of car parks, public toilets, shade and seating.

Sub-Theme – Footpaths

The need for an improved network of footpaths, shared paths and cycling paths formed a substantial part of the feedback received. There is a consensus that paths are a safety measure and are required to improve liveability of residents.

Sub-Theme – Car parking

Similar to paths, the need for appropriate and accessible car parking to support any development was a key theme from community. This is to support increased demand through peak use times and to improve accessibility and encourage participation for those of all abilities.

Sub-Theme – Supporting amenities

To improve user experience and general amenity, improvements to supporting amenities such as seating,

drink fountains, showers, shade and public toilets also featured heavily in the feedback received.

“More parking and accessible parking for those of us with mobility issues.”

“Walking around Portarlington is difficult given there is no network of footpaths – I must either walk on rough nature strips or share the road with cars.”

“There are no facilities (to my knowledge) that provide a place to change babies. Public toilet blocks need updating around the foreshore/park area.”



Image 7: The Foreshore public toilets, Steeles Rocks

KEY THEME 3 – PORTARLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

The Portarlington Neighbourhood House are currently housed at Parks Hall; the two main components of feedback that emerged related to the current tenancy/access arrangements and having suitable facilities to encourage additional programming. This is supported by a submission from the Portarlington Neighbourhood House Committee.

Sub-Theme – Tenancy

Concerns were shared by both community members and the Portarlington Neighbourhood House Committee around the lease arrangements for the Neighbourhood House currently in place at Parks Hall; relating to hours of access, method of booking and also cost. There was a sense that the existing arrangements of the City managing the bookings of the facility is limiting the potential for Parks Hall to be activated as community facility.

Sub-Theme – Facilities

In addition to receiving comments more broadly on the condition of facilities around and specific to Parks Hall (see ‘key theme 1’), both community members and the Portarlington Neighbourhood House provided feedback on the upgrades to facilities required to conduct the growing program of activities. On behalf of the Portarlington Neighbourhood House, this includes support for upgrades to Parks Hall in the short-term, with long term support for a purpose-built Community Hub.

“The location of PNH is ideal but it’s problems are the lack of small workspaces to accommodate the variety of classes.”

“Our club needs to conduct majority of activities under the same roof to support club ethos, create a ‘home’ feel and maintain cohesiveness.”

KEY THEME 4 – ARTS AND LIBRARY

A considerable component of feedback received related to the lack of suitable facilities within Portarlington to support the arts community, the absence of a permanent library and an emerging need for co-located workspaces for professionals and students.

Sub-Theme – Arts spaces

Feedback received from the arts community indicated that there is no current suitable space for messy / wet activities or any exhibition space to display and promote work in Portarlington. Appropriate storage was also raised as a barrier in accessing certain facilities.

Sub-Theme – Library provision

Portarlington is currently serviced by a mobile library service operated by Geelong Regional Library Corporation. Feedback advocates for a permanent library to improve on accessibility (due to steps to visit the mobile library and its location in a car park), and to provide other typical functions of a traditional library such as a full-time place for socialisation, printing, access to computers and co-working / casual workspaces to provide work from home alternatives and a place for students to study.

“We need space to exhibit local art and also spaces for workshops and classes.”

“I would like to have closer access to a library where I can sit and read the paper or have chats with other attendees.”

OTHER FEEDBACK

Community also provided feedback in relation to the draft Study itself, relaying that it was too long for the most part, however more detail is required on recommendations and implementation.

How we are responding

The key purpose of seeking community input is to ensure the Study and its recommendations provide a balance that reflects the findings of analysis, as well as needs and aspirations of the community.

The project team reviewed and considered all feedback and key themes in preparation of the final Study, incorporating the following.



KEY THEME 1 – UPGRADE EXISTING FACILITIES

As documented in the Study, analysis has found that Portarlington is well serviced for community spaces, and that a purpose-built Community Hub would result in underutilisation of existing facilities and create an oversupply of community facilities in the town.

Rather, improvements to existing spaces can be undertaken to ensure greater accessibility and functionality. This approach is generally supported by feedback received, noting there is mixed community sentiment around the town having a Community Hub in the longer term.

This feedback has been reflected in the Study by including 'building functionality' as a key pillar in the recommendations which proposes:

- Improvement works at City owned / managed facilities.
- Advocating for improvement works at State Government or privately owned facilities.
- A redevelopment of Parks Hall.

Consideration of the sub-themes (accessibility, functionality and impact on open space) will be addressed on a project-by-project basis, including future engagement opportunities with stakeholders and community; this is also relevant for the proposed Parks Hall redevelopment.

Demographics and population growth will continue to be monitored by the City to ensure facility provision meets demand.



KEY THEME 2 – CONNECTIVITY AND AMENITIES

As the Study relates to community facilities and services, public amenities around Portarlington such as car parking, footpaths, drink

fountains and seating are out of scope for this planning work.

However, a significant amount of feedback was received from community on this theme which will be considered and actioned by the City as follows:

- Feedback provided to and advocacy to Bellarine Bayside as land managers for the foreshore reserve to improve public amenities, working in partnership where appropriate.
- Incorporate into the development of the Portarlington Urban Design Framework which is being led by the City.
- Where appropriate, included in planning for facility improvement works on a project-by-project basis.



Image 8: Newcombe St streetscape, Portarlington



KEY THEME 3 – PORTARLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

Feedback received identified that the existing arrangements (tenancy and facilities) were not suitable for the Portarlington Neighbourhood House. This has been addressed in the following ways:

- The Study recommends a review of the booking system at Parks Hall;
- The Study recommends a redevelopment of Parks Hall inclusive of scope suggestions; this is to be refined further with all stakeholders (including the Portarlington Neighbourhood House) and community.
- The recommendations capture the need to review tenancy and leasing arrangements for the Portarlington Neighbourhood House at Parks Hall.

KEY THEME 4 – ARTS AND LIBRARY



As identified, significant feedback was received in relation to the provision of suitable arts spaces and a permanent library. This is reflected in the Study by recommending a redevelopment of Parks Hall which includes the following scope components:

- Enhancement of current library space to increase library service offering.
- A new combined library services / arts display space, an informal meeting space (lounge area), a casual foyer area for information and socialisation and a wet activity room.
- Improvements to the main hall to enhance multi-functionality i.e. lights, acoustics and partitioning.

Note: A permanent branch library in Portarlington is not strategically supported by the Geelong Regional Library Corporation Library Infrastructure Development Plan (2019).

OTHER FEEDBACK

Feedback received indicated that references to a 'Network of Facilities' was confusing. This has been removed from the final report, and rephrased to refer to 'enhancement of existing facilities.'

Conclusion

The final Study will inform the development of the Social Infrastructure Plan, Council's guide to investment in future social infrastructure projects.

<https://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/sip/default.aspx>

Attachment 1

The key objective of phase one engagement was to understand the strengths, barriers, challenges and opportunities relating to community facilities and services in Portarlington.

COMMUNITY SURVEY #1

A combination of quantitative and qualitative questions was asked as follows:

- What type of activities and services do you currently access in Portarlington?
- Which of the following community facilities do you use to access these activities or services?
- Are there any activities or services that you use outside of Portarlington?
- Are any of the activities or service that you use outside of Portarlington also available locally?
- If you access activities or services outside of Portarlington and a similar service or activity is available locally, what are your reasons for accessing the service or activity out of town?
- Are there any activities or services that you would like to access locally but which are not currently available in Portarlington?
- If existing facilities in Portarlington were upgraded and additional activities and services offered in the future, would you access more activities and services locally?
- How would you rate the following facilities in terms of meeting your needs?
- Please describe any improvement that these facilities may need to better meet your needs now and into the future.
- Please provide any other comments about community facilities, activities or programs in Portarlington (both now and into the future) that you have.
- How old are you?
- Where do you live (suburb)?
- Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about living in Portarlington most of the time?
- Which of the following statements best describes your current family or living situation?

Attachment 2

The key objective of phase two engagement was to seek feedback on the draft Study; understanding if the recommendations reflected community needs and identifying any additional components that needed to be considered.

COMMUNITY SURVEY #2

The survey aimed to provide a quick capture of community sentiment and asked:

- To what extent does the draft Scoping Study reflect your future aspirations / needs when considering community facilities in Portarlinton?
- What excites you about the draft Scoping Study?
- Have we missed anything, or do you have any ideas you would like to share with the Project Team?
- Which of the following best describes your connection to the area?
- Name / group (optional).