



**Altona Beach Precinct
Engagement Report
Pier Street Stage 4, Weaver Reserve
Upgrade and Esplanade Closure**



1. Introduction

This engagement report on the Altona Beach Precinct Engagement Process covers Pier Street Stage 4, Weaver Reserve and the proposed Esplanade Closure. This report should be read in conjunction with the engagement strategy for the project. The Altona Beach Precinct covered five council projects and one state government project taking a holistic approach given the proximity of these projects.

The Altona Beach precinct consultation was informed from the two previous year's consultation of the Altona Beach Summer Closure which saw the closure of the Esplanade between Bent Street and Pier Street and the creation of parklets in Pier Street between Queen Street and the Esplanade.

2. Executive summary

The consultation process for the Altona Beach Precinct ran from the 26 July 2020 until the 24 August 2020. Through social media it had a reach of over 69,000 people, with over 5,500 people visiting the online engagement component of the project which generated 579 responses to the consultation from 415 individual contributors. Three online community drop in sessions were held attended by 5 people.

Overall concept three was the preferred option by the community. With 74.4% of respondents indicating that this was their preferred option. This was backed up by a further 59.64% of respondents indicating that they would like to see a permanent closure of the Esplanade. Comments received by the community were that they love it and that it has a great community feel to it and makes people feel safe within the space.

There is a strong push from the community for this section of Pier Street and the connections to beach to have a pedestrian focus with the removal of cars from Pier Street, the increased size of the Weaver Reserve carpark with an entrance from Bent Street and also the widening of footpaths to accommodate better pedestrian flows. Increase street amenity is also a theme coming through the consultation with people wanting to see more street trees, more greenery and more shade within the space.

Similarly in Weaver Reserve the need for greater shade capacity is a dominant theme along with the ensuring that there are better connections from Weaver Reserve to the beach through a revitalised pedestrian access only Esplanade.

On road cyclists accessing the Esplanade closure continues to be an ongoing issue and this will need to be address in the detailed design of the Esplanade Closure.

Dominant themes of the Esplanade closure include the water play component and increased shade within the closure.

Responses from the Emergency Agencies were positive, given that two years' worth of seasonal closure have occurred with no issue arising from the Esplanade closure. Ambulance Victoria has requested that vehicle access be maintained to the lifesaving club pavilion and Fire Rescue Victoria have requested that vehicle access be maintained to fire hydrants in the area.

3. Background to the project

Council is proposing a number of upgrades in the coming years, as works continue with the urban renewal of the beach end of Pier Street; the potential closure of the Esplanade between Bent Street

and Pier Street; the raising of the seawall; a revitalised Weaver Reserve; a new beach entry to the swimming beach at the bottom of Pier Street; the realignment of the shared trail; a new pedestrian entry at Webb Street. As all of these project interconnect, it is important to look at them together to ensure what Council constructs works for the community, local groups, visitors and Council. There are a number of things that we must achieve to ensure the ongoing protection of both public and private assets. This section of Altona involves many factors:

- It is the major shopping precinct for local Altona residents.
- The precinct includes a train station which provides easy access to the trading precinct and beach, drawing a large range of users to the precinct.
- A number of community facilities sit within the precinct including the Altona Library, the Louis Joel Arts and Community Center, art gallery, senior's facility and the Altona Homestead (home of the Altona Laverton Historical Society).
- Ongoing seasonal parking issues in the trading and beach precinct, creating increased parking demand and pressure onto residential streets.
- It is one of the two main swimming beaches in the west and draws people from all suburbs in the western region of Melbourne during the warmer months.
- The beach sits adjacent to the major trading precinct for the area and has significant open space linking them together.
- Council is in the process of minimising the number of gaps in the seawall and raising it to protect the community from future sea level rise and storm surge events associated with the effects of climate change.
- Drainage is particularly challenging as Altona is low lying and generally flat. Once water gets behind the seawall it is difficult to get it back out into the sea.

Pier Street Stage 4

Pier Street Stage 4 extends from Queen Street down to the Altona Beach. Issues we are trying to address within the concept plans include:

- safe pedestrian access across Queen Street
- safe pedestrian access across the Esplanade
- better provision of pedestrian access along Pier Street including the possible widening of footpaths to accommodate increased pedestrian flows
- better provision of outdoor dining by widening the footpaths - improved pedestrian flows will also be achieved
- the provision of shade along the road by planting canopy trees
- increased parking issues resulting from changes to the footpaths
- drainage assessment to ensure that the works will not impact on the streets capacity to drain (resulting from the widening of the footpaths)
- enhanced streetscape presentation and provision of passive shade

Three concept designs were developed and presented to the community to initiate the conversation about what could be achieved in this section of Pier Street.

The Esplanade Closure

The closure of the Esplanade, as trialled for the last two summers, seeks to link the beachfront with nearby reserves, the Altona Lifesaving Club and the many cafes and shops on Pier Street, while improving pedestrian safety in one of the western suburbs' most popular summer hotspots.

While the last two summer's trials have proven successful, it is now time to decide what happens in this space permanently.

During previous community consultation relating to the closure of the Esplanade, we heard that the majority of people were supportive of the closure and enjoyed spending time in the pedestrian only space with family and friends. However, there was concern about the limited shade provision in the space and that it still 'felt like a road'.

Positive feedback was received regarding the pop-up park and the activation within this space including the seating, beach huts, basketball hoops, table tennis and other games. The community commented that this turned the space into a destination rather than a space to only pass through.

A significant portion of the community supported the permanent closure of the Esplanade. However, there were mixed results on whether this should be a permanent year-round closure or whether the closure should occur only during summer.

Weaver Reserve Upgrade

As part of each concept, Council will be looking to upgrade Weaver Reserve. Currently Weaver Reserve is used by picnic and beach goers throughout the summer months. The Tuesday market utilises the reserve for its stall holders and the Altona Lifesaving Club run programs on the northern section. Increasingly it is being used as a small intimate event space with recent examples including Summer Sounds, inflatable water slides and music events. There are also two picnic tables located in the reserve. Its connection to the Esplanade and the activations that have taken place there in the last couple of years has raised its profile as an important linkage between the Pier Street trading precinct and the foreshore.

4. Engagement process

Engagement Methodology

- Initial meeting with key stakeholder groups
- Open communication with these groups throughout the life of the project
- Test the concepts with Emergency Management agencies to ensure their requirements are addressed in any changes within the precinct
- Community consultation to garner the community's appetite for the concept designs
- Three drop in sessions (online) for the community to ask questions and provide feedback.
- Strong communication campaign during consultation period

Key stakeholder meetings

An initial key stakeholder meeting was undertaken with representatives from the Altona Village Traders Association, the Altona Lifesaving Club, the Louis Joel Centre, the Altona Seniors Club and the U3A presenting the concept plans and talking through the learnings from the previous two seasonal closures of the Esplanade. These key stakeholders were given the opportunity to take away the plans and meet with Council officers during the consultation period.

The Altona Lifesaving Club and the Louis Joel Centre both took up this opportunity to discuss operational issues surrounding their activities.

The Project Team also presented the three concept designs to the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee for feedback. Feedback was received from Fire Rescue Victoria and Ambulance Victoria. Summarised feedback attached.

Conversations were also undertaken with the Western Suburbs Tri Club to understand how operations currently work and what would be required to ensure their operation in the future.

Social Media campaign

14 social media posts reached in excess of 69,930 people driving people to the participate page.

Participants

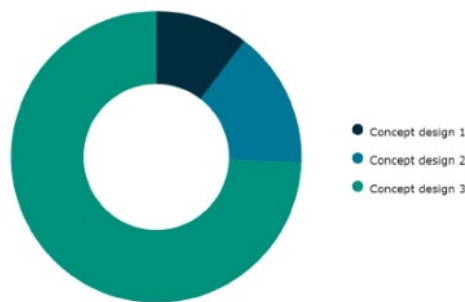
The online engagement process ran from 26 July 2020 until 24 August 2020. It received 5,515 views, being the number of times people visited a page on the site; with 2,979 single visitors to the pages. The online engagement process generated 579 contributions from 415 independent contributors. 58% of visitors accessed the site through links from social media, while 25% of people accessed directly to participate.

5. Themes from the consultation

The consultation process was broken into five council projects and one state government project. This report is based on three of these five projects: Pier Street Stage 4, Weaver Reserve Master Plan and the proposed Esplanade Closure. A breakdown of the results from the online engagement is detailed below.

5.1. Pier Street Stage 4

Preferred concept option



Concept	Percentage	Count
Concept design 1	10.40%	13
Concept design 2	15.20%	19
Concept design 3	74.40%	93
	n	125

Comments on the overall concepts

N=64

- Do we need that much car parking (10)
- Maximise green space and trees (10)

- Like the water play design feature on the esplanade (9)
- Maximise car parking (8)
- More street / park furniture (7)
- Focus on sustainable transport modes (7)
- No sand in the esplanade closure (6)
- Close the bottom end of Pier Street to cars (6)
- Like the esplanade closure (4)
- Don't want to lose green space for carpark (4)
- Have both exits to the carpark on Valetta Lane and Bent Street (3)
- Remove bikes from the Esplanade (3)
- Closure between Sargood Street and bent Streets (2)
- Bike lanes required (2)

Do you think we should increase the number of street trees in this section of Pier Street?



	Percentage	Count
Yes	82.40%	103
No	17.80%	22
	n	125

Comments on Street trees

Comments on trees

- Great (22)
- More green space and trees (15)
- Concerns on tree selection (12)
- Enough trees in the two reserves and the road space don't need any more (3)
- Don't want to lose carspaces for trees (3)
- Non allergen trees please (3)
- Smaller trees / greenery and colour (2)
- Priority should be given to pedestrians in this space (2)
- Utilise road space for cafes (1)
- Concerns about the street seating – aesthetic appeal (1)
- Paid parking (1)

Do you believe the pedestrian crossings should be raised?



	Percentage	Count
Yes	78.40%	96
No	21.60%	27

Footpath widening

Do you believe the footpaths should be widened on the trader side only?



	Percentage	Count
Yes	86.40%	108
No	13.60%	17

Do you believe the footpaths on both sides of Pier Street should be widened?



	Percentage	Count
Yes	77.60%	97
No	22.40%	28

Comments on the widening of footpaths

Comments

- Prioritise pedestrians – no cars (15)
- Make sure there is no loss of car parking (14)
- Widen all footpaths (11)
- Maximise parking (7)
- Widen eastern footpaths only (3)
- Don't agree to widen western footpaths (3)
- Close bottom section of Pier Street and the Esplanade between Sargood and bent Streets (3)

Car parking

Should we increase car parking capacity at Weaver Reserve?



	Percentage	Count
Yes	78.40%	98
No	21.60%	27

Valetta Lane Carpark Entrance



	Percentage	Count
Yes	77.60	97
No	22.40	28

Comments on Valetta Lane Carpark Entrance

- Intersection on Valetta Lane too tight (8)
- Reduces the impact on Pier Street (6)
- Need two exits to this carpark (5)
- Keeps traffic flowing on Pier Street (4)
- Pedestrian friendly (3)

Carpark extended to Bent Street with access from Bent Street



	Percentage	Count
Yes	79.20%	99
No	20.80%	26

Comments about extending the carpark to Bent Street with access from Bent Street

- Perfect / best access (18)
- Concerns about loss of open space (9)
- Focus on less vehicles (6)
- Two exits required for the carpark (6)
- Maximise parking spaces (5)
- Concerns about congestion in Bent Street (3)
- More parking required (2)

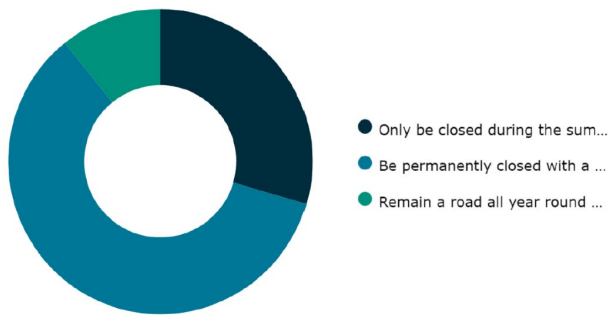
5.1.1. Key messages from the stakeholders

- Concept 3 is the preferred option.
- Extend the carpark to Bent Street
- Community is ok with the widening of footpaths
- Drive to make this section pedestrian friendly with a strong focus on pedestrian priority
- Increase street amenity through the use of trees and green space

5.1.2. What are the issues?

- Mixed responses about parking with maximise parking, reduce parking, and increase parking all comments received.
- There is growing push for the closure of Pier Street to cars between Queen Street and the Esplanade or the closure of the Esplanade up to Sargood Street.

5.2. Esplanade Closure



Type of closure	Percentage	Count
Only closed during summer	29.51%	90
Permanently closed	59.67%	182
Remain open all year	10.82%	33
	N	305

Should there be more trees planted along the Esplanade?



	Percentage	Count
Yes	80.98%	247
No	19.02%	58

Comments on the Esplanade Closure

- Love it (26)
- Close Pier Street from Queen Street to the Esplanade (6)
- Love the community feel when its closed (6)
- I like driving the Esplanade (6)
- Feel safer with the closure (5)
- Should closed Sargood Street to Bent Street (4)
- It needs to be pedestrian focused (4)
- Need to address issues with bikes and the shared trail (4)
- More shade trees (2)

5.2.1. Key Messages from the stakeholders

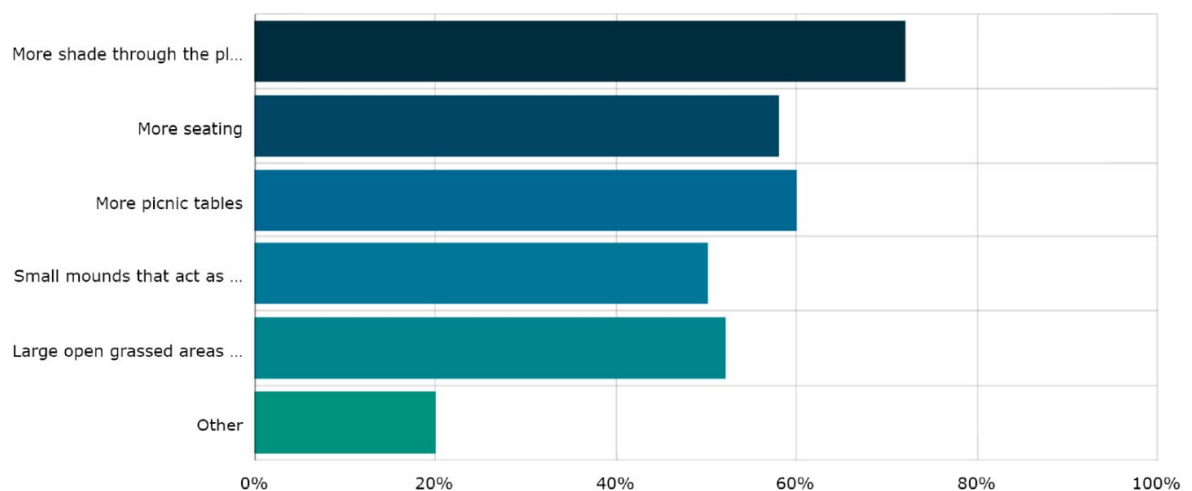
- 59.6% of respondents indicated that they wanted to permanently close the Esplanade and have a pedestrian only zone within this space.

- There is a wish for there to be shade within this space
- Very strong desire for a water park feature within the closure
- The closure generates a strong sense of community identity and makes people feel safer

5.2.2. What are the issues?

- 30% of respondents indicated that they would prefer only a seasonal closure and a further 10% indicated that they didn't want a closure at all.
- Road cyclists accessing the closure remains an issue.

5.3. Weaver Reserve Master Plan



Comments on the concept master plan

n=10

- Splash park (3)
- Picnic tables (1)
- Sculpture / art (1)
- Stage (1)
- More landscaping (1)
- Sensory garden (1)
- Play elements (1)
- Better connections with the beach (1)

5.3.1. Key Messages from the stakeholders

- More shade is required in Weaver Reserve
- Connecting the park with the beach through the esplanade is a priority

5.3.2. What are the issues?

- People seemed generally accepting of the master plan.

