



Rolling greens and fairways. Photography by Welsh & Major Architects.

3.0 Analysis of Community Engagement



OVERVIEW & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



Pathway and vegetation. Photography by Welsh & Major Architects.

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DATE	TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT
02/06/2018	Community Workshop
16/06/2018	Community Workshop
06/2018	Online Survey
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This section of the report summarises the methods and results from community engagement, undertaken by the Inner West Council to inform the Master Plan. Community engagement which was undertaken as an online survey and two drop in sessions. The information gathered through the consultation process assisted in establishing the Objectives and Strategies of the Master Plan.

Drop-In Sessions

The first drop-in session was held at Marrickville Golf Course on the 2nd of June 2018. A second session was held two weeks later at on the 16th of June 2018 at the same location.

Printed boards outlined key subjects around Marrickville Golf Course & Dibble Avenue Waterhole as well as a map indicating areas of significance. The members of the public were asked to identify as either 1st or 2nd priority for each or any of the presented topics. The results of these drop-in sessions are summarised in the adjacent table.

The spread, degree and range of priorities here offers a useful insight into the concerns of the both the council and the public. Patterns in consistency between the two sessions are also indicative of residual motives just as high numbers of responses to a certain issue are. This information allows us to focus the more qualitative feedback received in the survey.

Other stakeholders that were involved during the engagement period included the Golf Course executive, golf course members, residents adjacent to waterhole, residents around golf course vicinity and ecology groups on site at the golf course. Internal stakeholders included representatives from Properties, Major Projects and Facilities, Footpaths, Roads, Traffic & Stormwater, Community Services and Culture and Urban Ecology.

Online Survey

An online survey was conducted in June 2018 through Your Say Inner West, seeking feedback on a range of questions regarding Marrickville Golf Course and Dibble Avenue Waterhole. The survey recorded data and opinions on current usage of the sites.

The following analysis was informed by the survey report and will investigate community members' feedback, looking to frame how the public feel, and what areas of the course their feelings relate to.

	02/06/2018		16/06/2018	
OUTCOME	PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2
Maintain Bush Care Volunteers	1	1	1	2
Wildlife and Biodiversity Improvements	4	3	4	-
Shared Access - Dog Walking	2	3	3	2
Enhanced Golf Club Facilities	3	5	1	2
Encourage Participation - All Ages	8	3	-	1
Catch and Release Fishing - Cooks River	4	1	-	-
Socialisation and Friendship	7	2	-	-
Access and Road Safety Improvements	-	4	-	-
Restoration of the Dibble Avenue Waterhole	11	1	2	2
Improved water management practices	7	7	-	4
Cooks River - Boating and Kayaking opportunities	-	1	1	2
Water storage for irrigation on the golf course	7	4	1	-
Community markets	1	-	-	-
Shared use foot-golf	1	2	-	1
Marrickville Golf Club social events	4	3	-	-
Recreation through shared path development	1	4	-	-
Interpretation	n/a	n/a	2	2

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SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Golfing community:

Marrickville Golf Course is a well loved 18 Hole par 3 course which is an important asset, being the only course in the LGA and a notably accessible facility compared to other clubs within this proximity to the city.

Comments received by the golfing community iterated how important the course was for well-being, exercise and community, with the clubhouse being a fitting hub for members and local residents.

Active golfers believe the lands are well shared with other members of the public and that any adjustment in the provision of lands away from the current 18 hole set up would be to the detriment of the golf club and its community.

‘Marrickville Golf Club is as unique a club as you’ll find in Sydney - without pretence & welcoming to all’

Passive recreation community:

The course lands are a vital asset to the non golfing community too. Its wildlife, open green spaces and proximity to the river foreshore in an area that is increasingly subject to development and rising urbanity should be well managed and protected for future generations in their opinion.

There are some concerns that the land is not shared adequately and that the constant threat of being hit by a golf ball was significant. Some users were unsure that public were even allowed to access the lands.

Pathways

- The informal walking route along the foreshore is very popular with walkers and naturally does very little to interfere with golf play.
- The proximity to the river; mangroves and planting enhance the quality of the pathways.
- There are mixed opinions on whether this path should be developed into a shared used path in light of there being one on the other side of the river as well as an environmental / visual aversion to concrete pathways.
- Some users would like the pathway upgraded to be more suitable for cycling however.
- The many paved pathways in and around the course are in poor condition, users would like these better maintained.
- Users noted that in the winter when there is heavy rain and flooding the riverside walks become waterlogged and muddy.
- The speed of cyclists along the dirt path from the pedestrian bridge to Chadwick Avenue was of concern for many walkers.

Linkages

- There are many important links traversing the path, notably from

Alfred Street and Chadwick Ave to the pedestrian bridge linking the golf course to Beaman Park and the Cooks River Cycleway.

- The broken linkages across the site are an issue where paths do not meet up or have to cross an obstacle such as the Wardell Road bridge or the pedestrian bridge near the clubhouse. At this locations both key user groups stated that walkers crossing the first hole teeing ground to access the path was not a desirable situation.
- Users requested that the pathways through the park be upgraded and connected to the Greenway allowing for an alternate route to the Cooks River Cycleway, avoiding the busy and narrow crossing over Wardell Road.

Foreshore Edge Interface

- With the foreshore being an important asset to the course, users expressed a desire for more bushcare and regeneration along its edge, similar to that currently undertaken at Wave Rock. Provisions for activities such as kayaking / catch and release fishing were also noted.
- Areas of open and immediate proximity to the river are equally as important as the more naturalised stretches of foreshore and that although the sheet metal piling is in poor condition, naturalisation along the entire river isn't the right solution.
- Users suggested that there could be better provisions for socialising / events along the foreshore such as twilight picnics / concerts.

Trees / Planting

- The community maintains a close relationship with the wildlife and vegetation in the area. Initiatives regarding regeneration around the waterhole and in the golf course have significantly increased bird populations much to the delight of the community.
- The overall natural setting of the golf course is priceless and the informal and paired back character of its natural environment resonates with the community and the local area.
- Users would like more vegetation in wooded areas and along the banks of the river. They noted that under-story planting along the fairways would improve the challenge of the course, attract more wildlife and improve the visual environment.
- There was an expressed desire for a community garden to build on the existing community around the site for non-golf users.
- The users like the rainwater garden in the middle of hole 9. It was suggested that more be provided to harvest rainwater before entering the river and to increase the under story vegetation and wildlife along the course.

‘I would like to see a comprehensive environmental plan that maximises the golf courses ability to provide nature experiences for local walkers as well as a gem of a golf course in a river-side setting’

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Fencing / Boundary

- The fencing and access points around the perimeter were a particular issue to non-golfing users. The nature of the boundary adds to the feeling that the course is not open to the general public and access points aren't welcoming, informative or suited to both pedestrians and cyclists.
- There were requests for a fenced off area for off-leash dog walking.
- There was no major sentiment that fencing was not adequate to protect adjacent property however the introduction of fencing or screening along pathways to protect walkers / passive users was suggested by members of the golfing community.
- The derelict tennis courts at the end of Ewan Park and the associated fencing is noted by users as an issue, making the top end of the course less attractive and acting as a break in the green links that run through the site.

Water Management

- Users would like better access to water for course irrigation, stating the course is often in very poor condition in the summer.
- They noted that whilst the greens and teeing grounds receive attention, the lack of irrigation on the fairways brings down the quality of the course significantly.
- User groups were divided on the issue of usage of the Dibble Avenue waterhole. Those who seemed to have more of an interest in the waterhole frequently requested for it to be maintained better and for adequate water levels to be provided at all times.

Signage

- Users would like improved signage and access at the Beauchamp Street entrance to help people find the golf course and introduce the course to the public.
- Users thought that better signage regarding the wildlife, river and Dibble Avenue Waterhole could benefit the community and visitors.
- Both user groups have expressed a desire for signage to warn the other user group of the risk of being hit by balls or the risk of hitting a person.
- It has been noted that any signs that could be included in the master plan should be done so in community languages.

Clubhouse

- Users expressed a desire for the clubhouse to better engage with its surroundings to make it more appropriate for families. The provision of a verandah / outdoor non-smoking area was suggested.
- The survey highlighted a number of likes, dislikes and opportunities for the clubhouse that are outside the scope of the master plan such as a functions, facilities and funding.

Furniture

- The provision of benches / seating along the river was requested as well as more bins in key areas of the walking tracks with dog-waste bins and bags too.

Lighting

- Users of the course, especially local residents and walkers requested for lighting to be provided along the foreshore from HJ Mahoney Reserve to Chadwick Ave.
- There was concern from some residents living next to the course that this could lead to anti-social behaviour that the course currently doesn't suffer from.
- The fact that the course is completely dark at night time is however of particular value to some users who see it as a refuge away from the noise and light of the city that is constantly creeping into their night time environments.
- Better lighting along the driveway leading to the clubhouse was also noted by some users.

Shared Use

- There was a suggestion that on key dates throughout the year the course could be closed to golfers and opened up for community festivals, markets, activities thus allowing the wider community to experience the park lands and relate to the course as something that is theirs.
- Provide protected 'hides' so that walkers can have some sustained periods of protection where they can stop and enjoy the foreshore.
- The overwhelming majority of concerns and inputs regarding the shared use of the lands centred around the lack and therefore necessity of signage to inform walkers of the risks present and paths available to them to stay out of harms way.
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'... we need space that isn't organised or 'gamified' use. We need areas that have bush for our own physiological well-being and that of the wildlife it houses.'

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SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Dibble Avenue Waterhole

- The history of the site was important to some and suggestions were made to provide signage on this subject.
- A lot of residents in the area were fond of the wildlife and bird populations that are served by the waterhole environment and valued council initiatives to manage this aspect.
- There was a feeling among users that the low water levels and poor maintenance of the site was a missed opportunity to enhance this unique and diverse site. The resulting odour and rubbish from low levels and poor management were strongly resented.
- Some respondents questions whether on not public access should be provided, stating that the site was more important as a sanctuary for wildlife.
- Users frequently noted that the lack of visibility and access to the waterhole was an issue, excluding a large share of the community from its benefits. Along with this, it was noted that there are limited opportunities to sit / rest near it to enjoy the wildlife.
- Members of the community were well informed about its use for irrigation on the course and believe the preservation and adequate management of this function is a priority.
- The treatment of the banks was of concern to many members of the community. Whilst it was agreed that bank naturalisation and subsequent stabilisation is essential, who's responsible for this is not clear among users.
- The fencing around the water hole was troubling for many users, adding to the feeling that the waterhole was neglected by both the council and local residence and acting as an obstacle to increased engagement with the environment.
- The community were also interested in establishing a plan of management for maintenance, specifically the removal of rubbish which at it's presently low level is an increasing issue in the waterhole.
- Users mentioned that signage on the pathways near the waterhole along the Cooks River could inform and direct people to the waterhole thus increasing engagement and participation.
- Because of the environmental importance of the area and the wealth of wildlife and plants a possible integration of education amenities for local schools, groups and community initiatives was proposed.'

'It is a unique [...] link to our past sitting amongst modern development. It is home to our ever diminishing natural flora and fauna and should be preserved. At all cost.' -

- Users noted how the past accessibility and pontoon on the water lead to greater involvement with the waterhole and were interested in the pontoon returning. Other amenities such as a lookout for bird watching and a walkway were suggested.

Sentiment

There are a number of contrasting motives regarding what is perhaps the biggest issue facing the golf course lands, that of shared use between the golfing community and other users.

However; though all of the comments received there are strong alliances between the two groups centred around key beliefs.

What is clear for all and frequently stressed is that over-development would and could very likely be the worst possible outcome for the community. They see the threat of increased living densities, prices and the spread of the city as a real issue for the future of the area.

The open, informal and restrained typology of the course is what allows it pose as such an attractive environment for all user groups. Its green setting and proximity to the water are paramount to its value to the community who see these lands and the Cooks River as part of their identity.

'The space is a unique pocket of the Inner West that allows for a great walk, a great game of golf and a great way to allow for peaceful co-existence between many groups of the inner west. [...] do not harm this space with over development, or direct segregation of spaces.'



