

INNER WEST



Engagement outcomes report Draft Community Gardens Policy

Contents

Summary.....	3
Background	3
Engagement Methods.....	4
Promotion	4
Engagement outcomes	4
Officer comments in response to public exhibition	8

Summary

This engagement aimed to raise community awareness and invite feedback on the draft Community Gardens Policy through public exhibition on Your Say Inner West. This phase of community engagement followed on from earlier face-to-face engagement with community garden groups, the Environment Advisory Committee and other stakeholders during policy development.

The objectives of public exhibition were to:

1. Assess community support for the policy
2. Collect feedback for consideration by Council prior to the Policy's adoption.

Engagement targeted the wider community, community garden groups, visitors to parks and community members that interact with or have an interest in community gardens. Feedback was also invited on the draft Community Gardens Guidelines, which support policy delivery through practical guidance for community members.

The opportunity to view and comment on the Policy was promoted online, in newsletters, through social media, direct communications with community garden groups and physically with signage at community garden sites located on Council land.

During the public exhibition, between 11 August and 9 September 2020, 896 visitors viewed the project page, and 335 actively engaged with the information (for example downloading a document or viewing the feedback questions).

Thirty-six participants provided feedback. Both the Policy and the Guidelines were supported by the majority of respondents.

Small amendments are proposed to the policy relating to insurance and public access to community gardens.

Background

Community gardens are community-managed spaces for non-commercial food growing and other gardening activities that benefit the local community. There are 19 well-established community gardens in the Inner West, including eight gardens and a food forest located in Council parks. Council has enabled local groups to establish and maintain these community gardens through licences and other agreements. The Community Gardens Policy creates a framework for Council to support community gardens. It will enable the renewal of existing agreements for community gardens on Council land, as well as the establishment of new community gardens.

Public exhibition followed earlier consultation with stakeholders during policy development including Council's Environment Advisory Committee and community groups operating gardens on Council land.

Engagement Methods

Due to COVID19, the engagement method used for public exhibition was online, via yoursay.innerwest.nsw.gov.au.

Promotion

The engagement was promoted during the public exhibition period through:

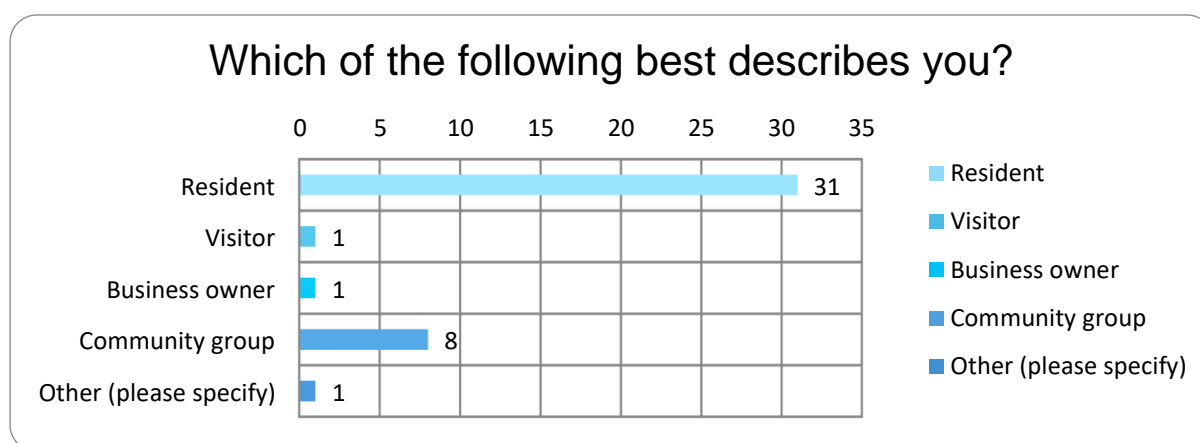
- Inner West Council social media - Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter
- Green Living Centre social media
- Inner West Council's website
- Council's electronic newsletters –Enviro What's On and Your Say Inner West
- Email notification to stakeholders, including Community Garden groups, the Inner West community garden network, Inner West Council's Environment Advisory Group, neighbouring councils, and community members who have previously made enquiries about establishing new community gardens
- Face to face meeting with community garden groups on 15 August 2020 at the Inner West Community Garden Network meeting
- Posters posted on all community garden sites in Council parks, including a QR code and URL
- Inner West Sustainable Schools network

Engagement outcomes

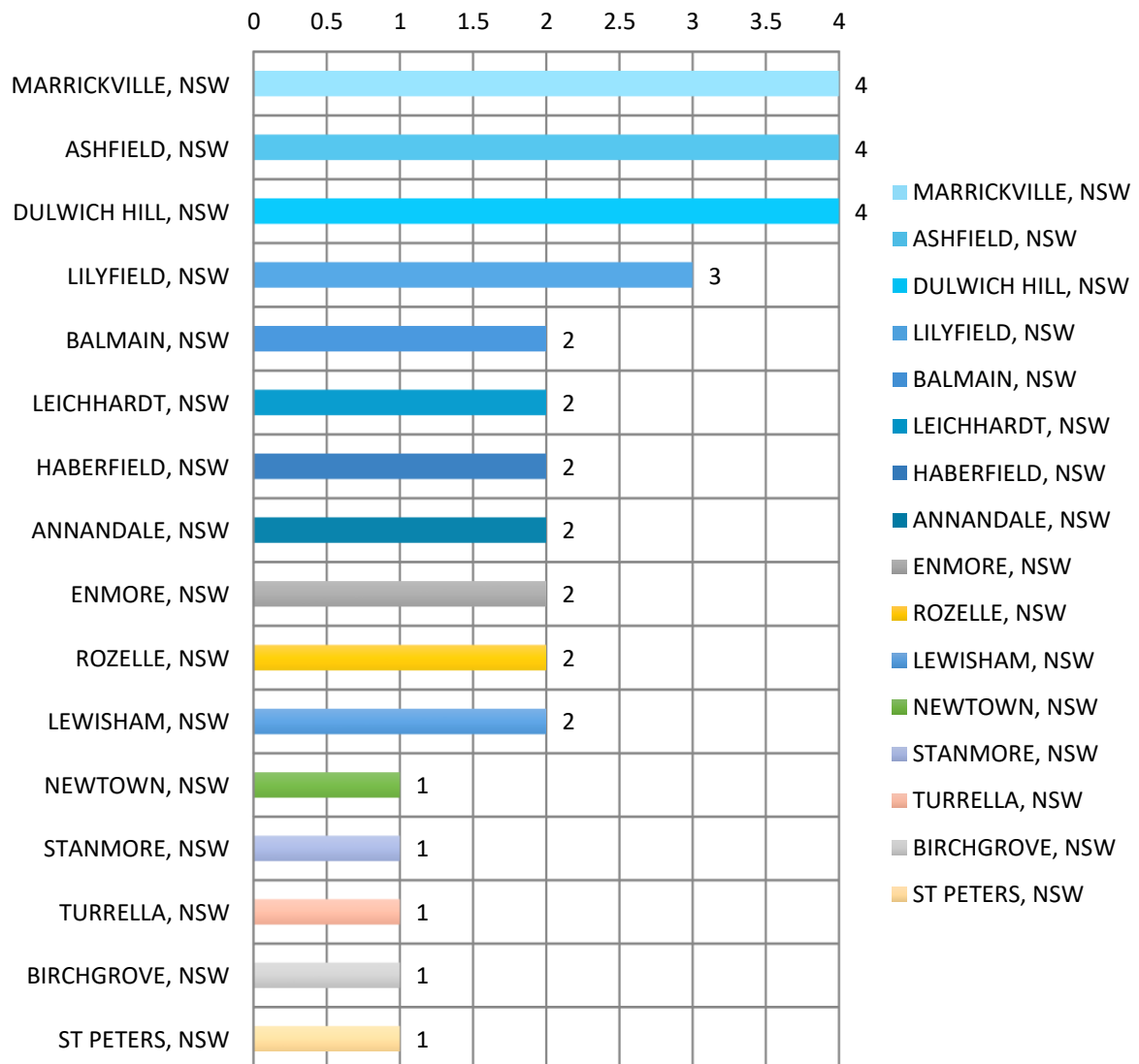
During the exhibition period 11 August to 9 September (30 days)

- 896 visitors viewed the project page
- 335 visitors actively engaged with the information, for example downloaded a document or looked at the feedback questions
- 36 provided feedback

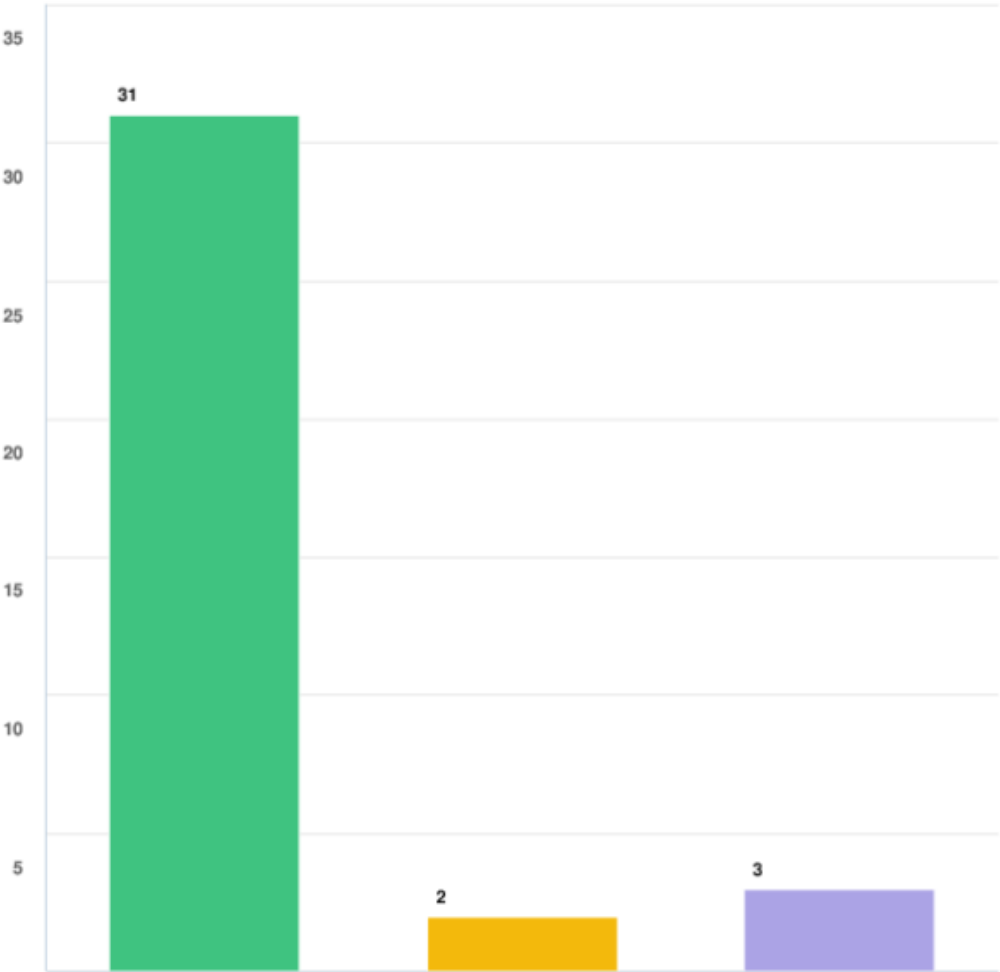
Who did we hear from?



Suburb



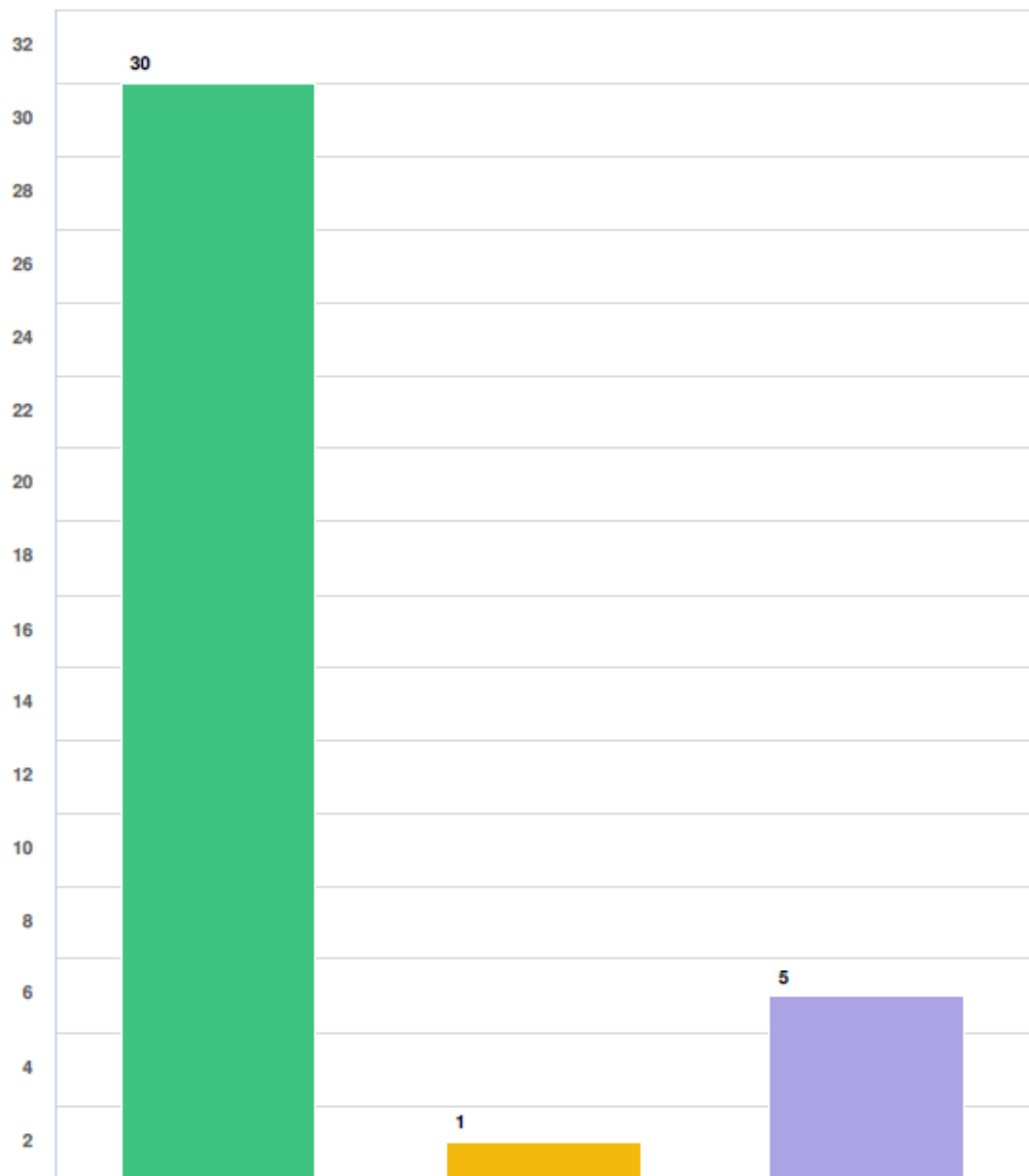
Do you support the draft Community Gardens policy?



Question options
● Yes ● No ● Unsure/Neutral

Optional question (36 response(s), 0 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Do you support the draft Community Gardens guidelines?



Question options

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure/Neutral

Optional question (36 response(s), 0 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

Officer comments in response to public exhibition

The main themes that emerged from the engagement were:

Community support for the draft Policy, Guidelines and community gardens

There was strong support for the draft Community Gardens Policy with comments that it was encouraging, clear and simple to follow.

There were many positive comments about community gardens on public land in the Inner West with people keen to see more. Submissions referred to the positive contribution community gardens make to shared open space in the Inner West, identifying benefits such as promoting community spirit, neighbourhood connection, mental health, sustainability and the environment, intergenerational and multicultural connection, neighbourhood connection, healthy living, and education for children and adults.

The community values open inclusive and fair community gardens

Submissions valued open and inclusive community gardens where all are welcomed. Some raised concerns about fair participation in community gardens, especially by those who do not identify as community garden group members. People want to see opportunities for access by the wider community including vulnerable or financially insecure community members. A few submitters, including supporters and opposers of the policy, commented they had experienced community gardens as inaccessible or exclusive, for example with long waiting lists or closed groups.

Changes have been made to the guidelines to reinforce the requirement that groups reduce physical and social or attitudinal barriers to participation by all members of the community. Staff will provide guidance and advice to community groups to support this.

A concern was raised by one group that the requirement for public access to gardens suggests that groups must allow non-members or visitors to harvest from the garden at all times. The proposed amendment confirms that the access requirement relates to visiting only.

An amendment is proposed to Section 7.1.6 (Ongoing Requirements) to reflect that the public should be able to visit community gardens in parks at all times.

Operational costs to community garden groups

Some community garden groups raised concerns about increased operational costs if Council passed on the cost of utilities such as mains water. Council reserves the right to pass on utilities charges but does not currently do this and does not intend to do so in the near-term. However, the policy is designed to allow flexibility to respond to future needs, including extreme or excessive water consumption.

Policy's application to existing groups

Some groups asked for clarification about whether the policy applies to groups with current licences, including the requirement for raised beds. The policy does apply to community gardens with current licences and will be used to inform all new agreements.

The policy only requires that new garden beds are raised. Established gardens will not be required to retrofit existing gardens, unless they are installing new garden beds.

Insurance requirements

Community groups asked for insurance requirements to be made clearer, and some were concerned about the cost of insurance. However, most groups did not raise the cost of insurance as a concern.

An amendment is proposed to Section 7.1.8 Risk management and insurance to clarify that Council holds insurance to cover gardeners' personal injury insurance, but not public liability insurance cover which must be held by groups. Neither community garden groups nor individual members will need to register as Council volunteers. For insurance purposes, Community Garden groups will need to maintain and be able to provide a record of activities undertaken at the garden by members and helpers.

Soil contamination – Option to undertake soil testing rather than install raised garden beds

Some submissions commented that groups could test for soil contamination, rather than being required to install raised garden beds. No change is proposed to the Policy, but the Guidelines have been updated to confirm the reason behind this requirement which is to prevent a costly and unnecessary process for groups. A precautionary approach has been adopted because the certified, comprehensive soil testing required is expensive and complex, and would create a burden for groups, and because there is a very high likelihood that testing will confirm contamination.