

Community Engagement Results Report

H Swain Reserve Play Space Equipment Renewal Project

Background

A key responsibility of the Parks and Open Space team is to conduct regular inspections of community parks and play spaces. During an inspection in 2023, it was determined that the plywood train at H Swain Reserve had reached the end of its useful life and was due for replacement. The structural assessment conducted by officers confirmed the need for replacement and signalled that the current historic design did not meet accessibility requirements and does not accommodate all members of the diverse community.

In accordance with standard Council practice, the replacement of individual "like-for-like" play items typically occurs without community consultation. As such, the community was notified in early 2024 of the planned works.

Following community feedback expressing the importance of this play item to the local area, the replacement project was paused. In response, a community consultation process was launched to gather input on the proposed replacement structure.

Council initiated the community consultation from the 15 November – 13 December 2024, inviting residents to share their views.

Council recognises the value this play item holds for local families and is committed to preserving its character as part of the renewal. Two options were presented to the community for consideration inviting respondents to choose between Option A and Option B (see image below).

Which option do you prefer?



Option A



Option B

Each option was accompanied by an overview of its characteristics and opportunities and limitations for its delivery. The table below includes further information.

Details of Option A

Delivery	2024/2025
Cost	\$
Accessibility	Accessible - Will be designed to ensure it is accessible, to cater for a wide range of abilities
Capacity	8 Children
Materiality	Created from 13mm thick compact material (HPL), providing excellent weather and vandal resistance
Finish	Finish Integrated into HPL, as above. Colours will be selected to match the existing play space.
Maintenance	Parts are easily replaceable

Details of Option B

Delivery	2026/2027
Cost	\$\$
Accessibility	Accessible - Will be designed to ensure it is accessible, to cater for a wide range of abilities
Capacity	2-4 Children
Materiality	To be created from marine plywood, to preserve the qualities of the existing train. Marine plywood is the most durable plywood available, providing high strength and impact resistance.
Finish	Paint finish in colours chosen to match the existing train

Maintenance	Will require increased maintenance in comparison to Option A, due to natural material selection and paint finish
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Participation Methods

The community engagement process ran for four weeks, from Thursday, November 15, to Friday, December 13, 2024.

As part of our community engagement efforts, the Council conducted a letterbox drop to homes within a 100m radius of the site. Engagement was also promoted through posters displayed in the park and at local cafes, libraries, and shops. To make the consultation page easily accessible, all materials included a QR code linking directly to the "Your Say" page.

Residents were encouraged to provide feedback via an online survey on the consultation page. The details of the consultation were translated into multiple languages to ensure accessibility for our diverse community. Additionally, individuals with hearing difficulties could participate through the National Relay Service.

Children were invited to take part in the consultation during a pop-up session with Council staff on Saturday, November 23, from 10 AM to 12 PM. Community stakeholders were also engaged through emails sent to residents who had previously expressed interest in the project.

Participation Analysis

Breakdown of Consultation Participants:

- 316 people visited the "Your Say" page during the engagement period.
- 91 responses were received via the "Your Say" page.
- 19 people participated in the pop-up session at the reserve.
- 63% of respondents were residents of Preston.
- 17% of respondents speak a language other than English at home.
- 64% of respondents were women, 32% were men, and 4% identified as gender diverse.

- 100% of respondents reside in Darebin.

Officers were pleased with the strong participation in the community engagement process. As a popular and frequently visited local play space, the project generated a high level of interest and involvement. Officers were also satisfied with the timing of the pop-up session, which coincided with a busy period, allowing many residents to engage with staff.

The table below illustrates the various engagement activities, and the information received through each activity.

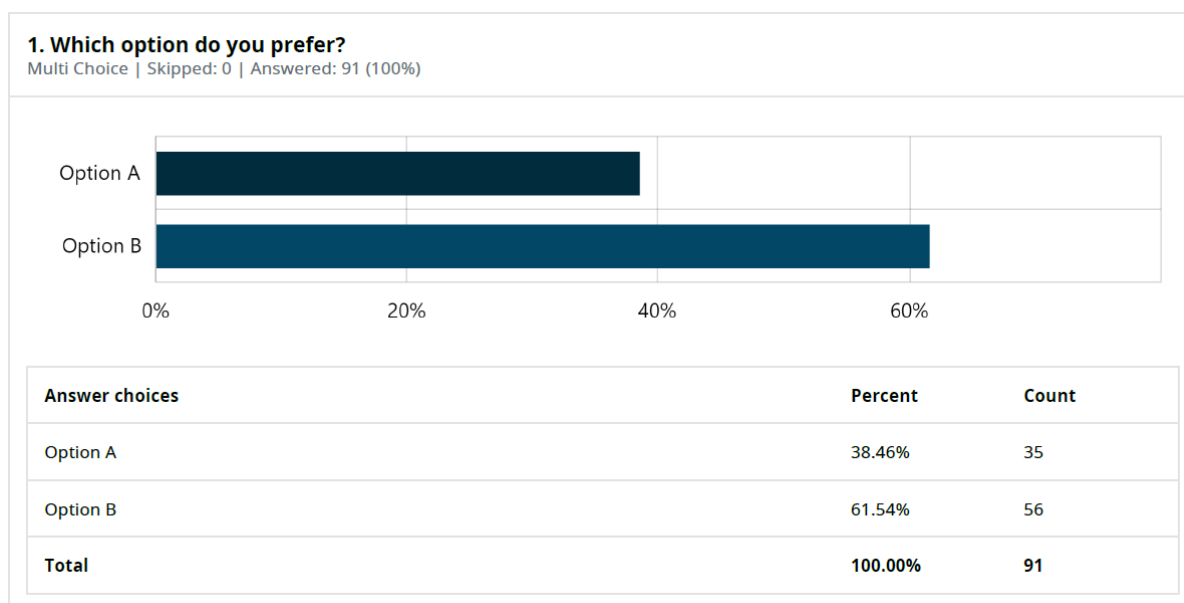
Engagement Activity	Number of participants/ people engaged	Targeted group	Demographic information
Letterbox drop to local residents within 100m of the reserve.	200	The local community.	The population estimate for Preston Activity Area as of the 30th June 2023 is 4,948. Since the previous year, the population has grown by 4.28%. Population growth in City of Darebin was 3.37%. Overall, the median age in the population of Preston is 34 and 18% of couples have children. 43% of people in Preston speak a language other than English at home. Aside from English, the languages most spoken in the region are Chinese, Italian and Greek.
Pop- Up Session held at H Swain Reserve	19 participants	Visitors to the park and local residents.	Darebin Council Officers attended an on-site pop-up session on Saturday 23 November 2024 at 10 AM. The time chosen was selected as staff anticipated this time being a peak visitation period. Many community members were present and enjoying the local site and officers were able to engage visitors to provide their

			feedback to the project. Children were also invited to submit their preference for the new play piece. Of the 19 participants, 9 were children.
Community outreach to local schools and kindergartens and residents who'd previously indicated an interest in the project.	23 local people and 3 local schools	Local community stakeholders.	In early 2024, the Council planned to replace the plywood train at H Swain Reserve as a direct, like-for-like replacement, following a parks audit which identified the item as have reached its end-of-life. As such, a community consultation process had not been conducted initially, as projects of this nature are typically handled in this way. However, in response to the feedback received, the Council launched a community engagement process to gather input on the project. During this first period, 23 people shared their views with the Council, and each was re-engaged during the consultation to provide formal feedback. Additionally, three local schools were involved and encouraged to share the details of the consultation with their networks.
Your Say page engagement	91 submissions were received during the engagement period	Darebin Community	Of the people who participated in the survey, the following demographic data was provided to Council: - 64% of all respondents were women, 32% were men and 4% identified as gender diverse people. - 62% of respondents live in Preston. - 5% of all respondents identified as Transgender or gender diverse people.

			- 1% of respondents were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. - 3% of respondents were people living with a disability. - 17% of respondents speak a language other than English at home. - 22% of respondents were born overseas.
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Engagement Results

The following graph provides a summary of the online results registered during the community consultation process:



Community members who participated in the pop-up session at the park expressed preferences for both Option A and Option B.

Those who favoured Option A cited the cost savings and faster delivery time of the replacement vehicle as key factors in their decision. They noted that the replacement closely resembled the original."

On the other hand, those who chose Option B emphasised the importance of preserving the long-standing history of the train at Swain Reserve. They referred to the site's unofficial nickname, 'Train Park,' and highlighted how much children enjoyed this feature.

Recommendations

Based on the community feedback received, Council Officers recommend the construction of a custom-built plywood train inspired by the existing model train. The new play item should maintain the style, colour, and shape of the current train, with size adjustments made to ensure it is accessible to all members of our diverse community.