

Engagement Summary

You Yangs Precinct Master Plan and Business Case

April 2020



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Healthy People®*





Acknowledgement of Country

The area in scope for this project is of high cultural significance for the Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung people. This project will ensure that the values and aspirations of the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (Wadawurrung) are captured and reflected in any precinct redevelopment work. Options to both protect and promote the area's Aboriginal cultural heritage will be explored, such as through cultural education, interpretation, visual and performing arts, and walks on Country.

Partnership with Wadawurrung

Involving the Traditional Owners throughout the master planning and business case processes is vital to ensure that the values and aspirations of the Wadawurrung are captured and reflected in the project. There are significant opportunities for the precinct to celebrate the region's cultural heritage – such as cultural education, interpretation, visual and performing arts, and walks on Country.

We propose a targeted engagement process to explore these opportunities and the benefits that they could realise and to develop a strong relationship with the Wadawurrung. This collaboration will also assist in the identification of other key stakeholders, and help to identify and incorporate existing relevant research and cultural heritage knowledge.

The detailed methodology outlines the engagement and consultation approach with stakeholders and Traditional Owners. Engagement methods included ensured the reach to a wide range of business, industry, community and professional organisations.

Engaging with Indigenous communities requires specialist knowledge and communication skills. The approach to engagement is guided by three key principles, which will allow the methodology to be delivered under a shared values-based approach with respect and cultural competence, early engagement and a flexible approach.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of engagement with stakeholders and community and demonstrates how this input has guided the development of the draft master plan and business case for the You Yangs Precinct.

This project will assist Parks Victoria and Regional Development Victoria in their consideration of future government investment for the You Yangs Regional Park and Serendip Sanctuary (You Yangs Precinct). With current visitation increasing, there is an opportunity to both promote and enhance visitor experiences. The draft master plan and business case identify and evaluate key opportunities to enhance visitor experience whilst supporting increased visitation in the precinct and surrounding region. This analysis will aid decision-makers in considering how to allocate funds to support future operations within the precinct.

The scope of the project includes:

- Investigation of opportunities to protect and enhance the Wadawurrung history and culture to develop cultural tourism opportunities;
- Investigation and analysis of opportunities to develop complementary visitor and event facilities, improve existing infrastructure, and introduce technical features to diversify the mountain bike offer;
- Review of the current tourism offering at Serendip Sanctuary and recommendations for upgrading the assets to lift the quality of visitor experience; and
- Completion of a robust business case, consistent with the Victorian Government's Investment Lifecycle and High-Value High-Risk Guidelines to determine options for investment across both sites (including private sector investment), including demand analysis, an economic impact assessment and analysis of the social, environmental and commercial issues that will impact the proposal.

Stakeholder and community engagement has been essential to informing and evaluating the benefits of future investment and ensuring that all options have been fully considered. Strategic project directions have been guided by a Project Control Group, which includes representatives from Parks Victoria, Regional Development Victoria, City of Greater Geelong, Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation, Tourism Greater Geelong and the Bellarine, and Visit Victoria.

The engagement program was held across the first two stages of the project. Stage one involved targeted stakeholder engagement to understand the place context and capture key ideas. Stage two tested draft principles and opportunities with the community, park users and stakeholders.

The You Yangs Precinct draft master plan will be released for community feedback in June – July 2020.

1

Context Research

July - August 2019



Stakeholder Engagement

July - August 2019

2

Concept Development

August - September 2019



Community Engagement

September - October 2019

3

Draft Master Plan and Business Case

December 2019 - February 2020

4

Business Case

February 2020

Draft Master Plan & Engagement Summary Released

June – July 2020



Approach

The engagement process was tailored for different audiences and designed to enable participants to make informed contributions at key intervals in developing the master plan and business case.

Engagement objectives

The engagement approach was designed to ensure that all community and stakeholders were informed, involved and able to contribute their ideas, inform the ongoing visioning, and guide the direction of the master plan and business case to ensure a sense of shared ownership.

The objectives of engagement were to:

- Capture and define the aspirations and expectations of the community and stakeholders interested in, or affected by, the future of the precinct.
- Increase partner, stakeholder and community awareness of involvement in, and support for, any future changes.
- Undertake engagement activities and initiatives to enable participants to make informed contributions relating to developing the draft master plan and business case.

Participants

Stakeholders across the following groups were engaged to varying degrees during the engagement process:

- Government, statutory and tourism bodies
- Traditional Owners (represented by Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation)
- Parks Victoria rangers and site teams
- Tourism and commercial operators
- Community organisations and groups
- Special interest groups
- Project Control Group (PCG)
- Community / local residents.

Methodology

Engagement activities ran from July to October 2019. Provided below is an overview of the different engagement methods.

1. Wadawurrung meetings

August, September and December 2019

Wadawurrung was invited to all PCG meetings, participated in off-site meetings and a walk on Country to capture known cultural values and establish knowledge gaps in regards to values, park activities and how these may interact with cultural values both known and unknown.

2. Key stakeholder conversations

July – September 2019

Key stakeholders were consulted through one-on-one or small group conversations to understand the place context, what people value and love about the You Yangs Precinct, and the potential opportunities and challenges for the area. Stakeholders included Parks Victoria on-site rangers, City of Greater Geelong council officers, tourism and commercial operators, community organisations, and special interest and user groups.

3. Online survey

18 September – 16 October 2019

An online survey ran over four weeks through the Engage Victoria platform. The survey was designed to understand visitation to the precinct including frequency and reasons to visit and to gauge community and stakeholder priorities for activating and linking the precinct.

4. Community drop-in sessions

10 and 12 October 2019

Two community drop-in sessions were conducted on Thursday 10 October, 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm at Little River Mechanics' Institute Hall, and Saturday 12 October, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm at Lara Hall. The sessions presented a snapshot of the work completed to date along with principles and concepts. Attendees were encouraged to discuss and comment on the concepts to assist in refining and prioritising.

5. Project website

A range of communication tools was used to promote participation in both the online survey and drop-in session. This included a media release, email notification to stakeholders, and Engage Victoria project website.





What We Heard

There was a significant amount of interest and participation in the engagement process with over 1,000 people contributing through face-to-face and online engagement.

Diverse responses were gathered through each method of engagement. This included the participation of 13 stakeholder groups in stakeholder interviews, 1,132 responses to the online survey, 48 attendees at the drop-in session, and 3,230 visits to the Engage Victoria project website.

There were differing views about the future of the precinct. Some stakeholders welcomed new visitor infrastructure and amenities, upgraded tracks and rehabilitated landscapes; however, others were concerned about the level of development.

About the You Yangs, there were strong views expressed concerning maintaining use for mountain biking and creating protected areas for wildlife. There was consensus for maintaining the park for recreational access for all users.

Concerning Serendip Sanctuary, local community and environmental groups expressed strong views on the future of Serendip, stressing the need to maintain it as a sanctuary with a defined boundary to maintain a quiet space for animals.

Highlight rich film history of the area

Opportunity to connect with the mountain bike club and relevant groups to strengthen tourism and connect to cultural goals

Consider a 'tree climb' concept within either You Yangs or Serendip Sanctuary

Provide education around conservation and flora and fauna values



Wadawurrung

The project team has worked closely with Wadawurrung as a key partner throughout the project. Discussions centred around opportunities and constraints for the project and how cultural values could be celebrated to gain a richer understanding from Traditional Owners.

Key issues included:

- Difficult to gain an understanding of the precinct's cultural value and significance to the Wadawurrung community.
- Ensure new works and improvements respond to and protect cultural values and sites of significance, both known and unknown.
- Sites of significance and archaeological deposits and artefacts exposed and requiring protection.
- The capacity of the organisation and community to deliver cultural initiatives and experiences, and to identify what steps need to be taken to support such initiatives.
- Defining ongoing partnership and joint management arrangements.

Key opportunities included:

- Celebrate Wadawurrung's living culture and values and tell its stories.
- Support strategic directions being developed as part of Wadawurrung's Healthy Country Plan.
- Protection of current sites of cultural significance.
- Build capacity within the community and further contribute resources and cultural education experiences to support tourism objectives.
- Provide facilities and experiences that educate visitors on traditional ways of living, housing and Indigenous plants and bush tucker.



KEY

- 1 Cultural recognition, interpretation and story-telling led by Wadawurrung
- 2 Completing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the You Yangs
- 3 Defining partnership opportunities and joint management
- 4 Protection of current sites of cultural significance
- 5 Build capacity and resources to contribute to tourism opportunities



KEY

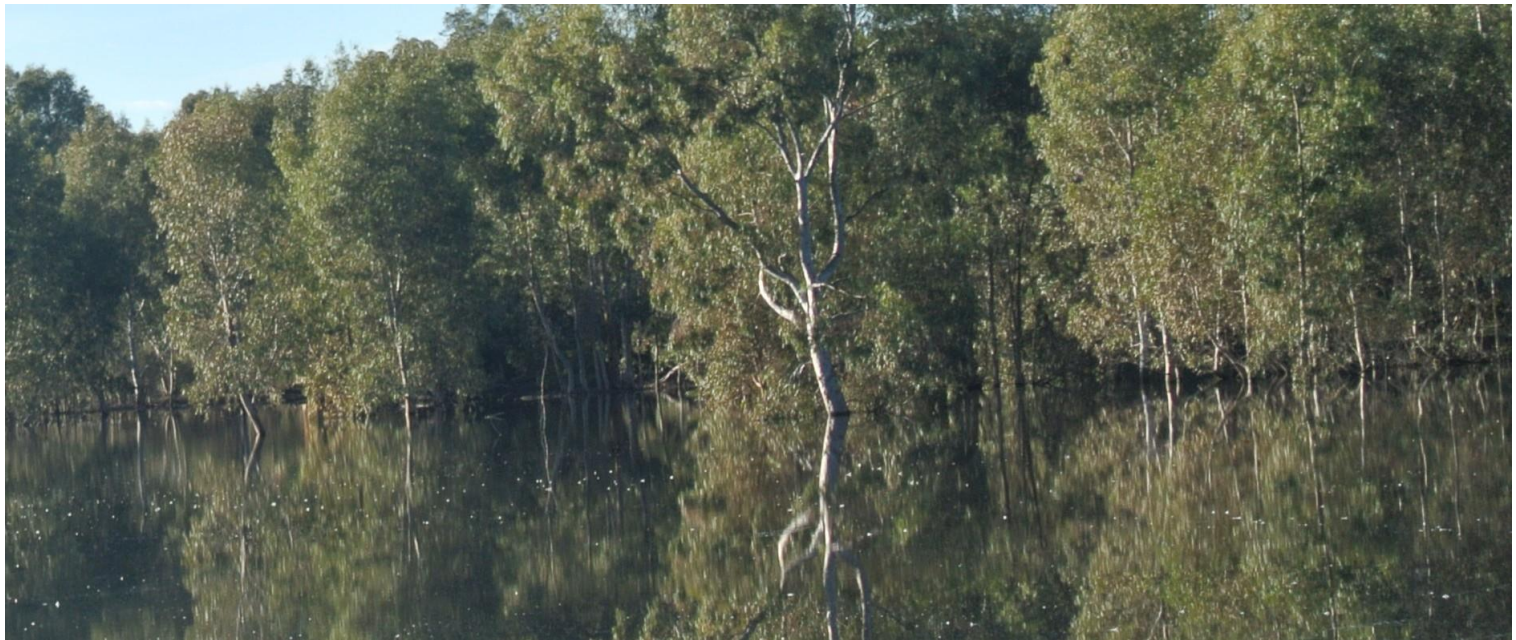
- 1 Views, viewlines and landscape connections
- 2 Recognising the cultural significance of the You Yangs and the region to Wadawurrung
- 3 Creating a connected precinct - to Lara and Little River, Geelong and Wyndham
- 4 Create a connected brand identity and improve promotion
- 5 Need for essential upgrades and site maintenance

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholders including government and statutory bodies, Parks Victoria site teams, tourism and commercial operators, and community organisations and groups were engaged during the engagement process. Their input helped to build an understanding of the place context, what people value and love about the You Yangs Precinct, and the potential opportunities and challenges for the area.

Key issues include:

- Multiple entries and lack of/conflicting signage and disconnected and unsafe walking/cycling connections.
- Limited understanding of the cultural significance of the You Yangs and the region and no/limited interpretation signage.
- Lack of consideration to the broader ecological and geological landscape, including Anakie Gorge, Brisbane Ranges.
- Limited understanding of the current role of Serendip Sanctuary within the Lara and Little River communities, and infrequent use for educational purposes.
- The poor condition of roads and tracks, limited access for low mobility, and the poor state of vegetation (i.e. weeds and branches) and consideration for environmental impacts.
- Navigation difficult beyond main signs and confusion around the type of recreation opportunities (i.e. walking, mountain bike riding, horse riding) in different areas.
- Limited reasons to stay and spend money within the precinct or in Little River and Lara to extend visitors' stay.



Key opportunities include:

- Enhancing the precinct's role as an active place with diverse recreation activities including mountain biking, walking, trail running and horse riding.
- Celebrating significant Indigenous heritage and the chance to learn about Wadawurrung culture.
- Accessibility to wildlife and the ability to immerse in nature with easy access to view native wildlife.
- Many activities and users co-existing, making it a place for all.
- The You Yangs are distinctive in the landscape with an iconic silhouette, significant view to and from, and unique geology.
- Enhancing the area as a local community asset, providing access to significant green space for the communities of Lara, Little River and Wyndham.
- Education and learning with free access to many local schools and children with learning difficulties.
- Creating connections to broader ecological corridors from Port Phillip Bay to the Brisbane Ranges.
- Hidden and peaceful places within that provide an oasis for visitors.

Clear signage drawing people from the freeway and Avalon Airport

Plan and equip key visitation areas for drought and climate change to create a resilient place

Promote the precinct for school groups - potentially as a school camp

Create formal pedestrian routes to and from Lara

Convert the Duck Pond School to a café



KEY

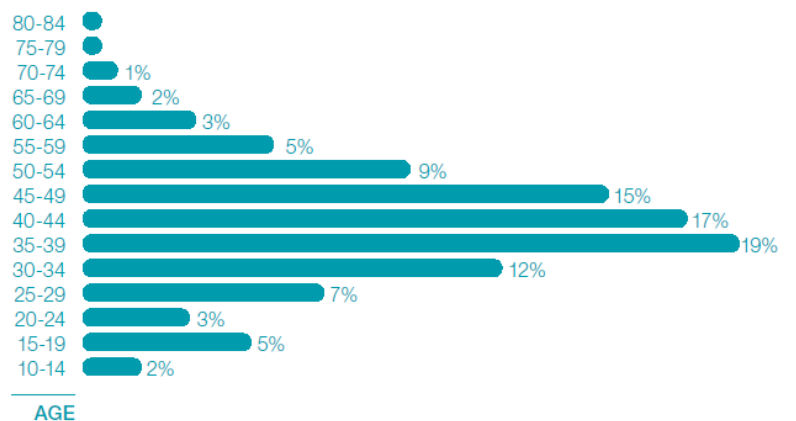
- 1 Maintain and improve mountain biking facilities
- 2 Balancing users and uses with the need to protect wildlife habitats
- 3 Wadawurrung cultural heritage celebration through signage and guided tours
- 4 Provide greater educational opportunities
- 5 Improve accessibility for people with limited mobility
- 6 Keep Serendip Sanctuary as a quiet space to view wildlife and reconnect school groups and educational opportunities
- 7 Need for a low-impact café facility at or near the You Yangs
- 8 Long-term management expanded to include the whole region from the Brisbane Ranges to the bay
- 9 Ability to take dogs to the You Yangs is a key strength of the park

Community Feedback

The online survey focused on broader community discussion, testing draft principles and initial concepts, and provided direction for the prioritisation of concepts to understand short and long term opportunities.

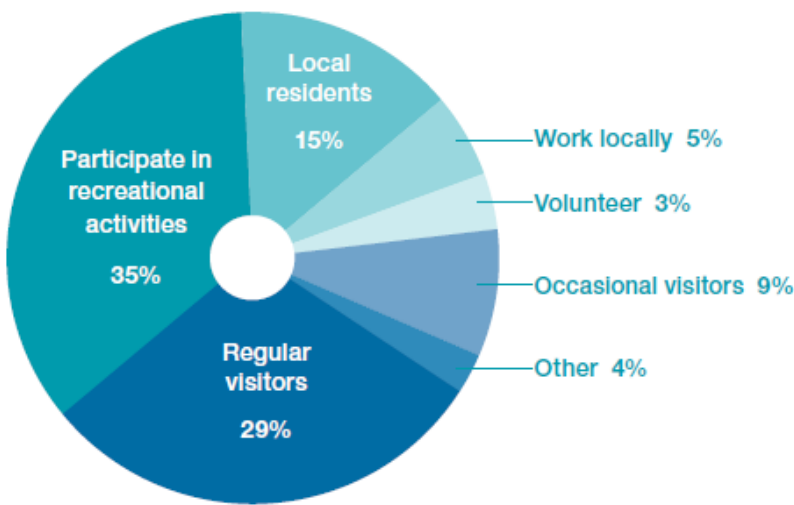
Demographic Information

Two hundred and fifty postcodes were represented with the highest response from the Lara area (12 per cent). Of the respondents, the majority were male (72 per cent) and aged in the 30-54 age bracket (73 per cent). The figure below shows a breakdown of survey respondents by age group.



Respondents were asked what their connection to the You Yangs Precinct was and were able to select multiple options.

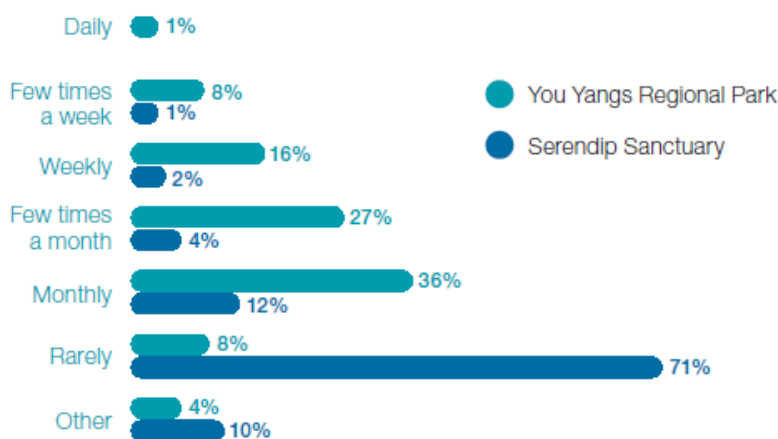
Regular visitors and people who regularly participated in recreational activities were large contributors to the survey. Respondents who selected 'other' included people that visited the site for work related activities such as Licensed Tour Operators (LTOs), wildlife and conservation, mountain biking, education and school groups.



Visitation

Participants were asked how frequently they visited the precinct with responses split between the You Yangs and Serendip. While visitation to the You Yangs is reasonably frequent, Serendip Sanctuary was rarely visited.

The majority of 'other' responses for You Yangs consisted of people that visited yearly or a few times a year, while for Serendip Sanctuary this consisted of people who had never visited.

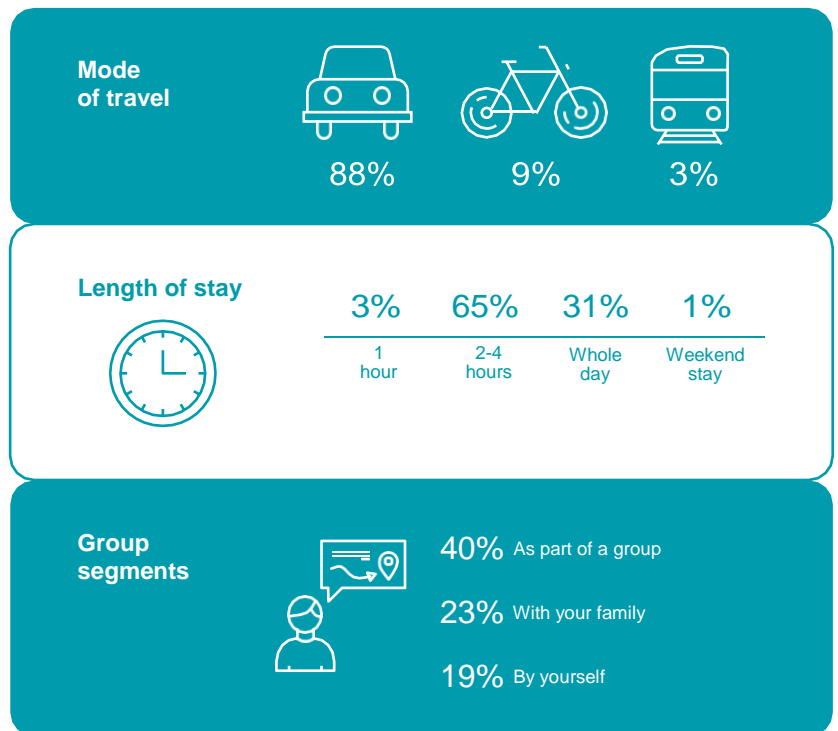


Respondents were asked why they visit the You Yangs Precinct and were able to select more than one option. The majority of responses listed undertaking outdoor activities (88 per cent). A further 17 per cent noted day-tripping and sightseeing, 8 per cent noted visiting friends and family, and only one per cent noted staying overnight. There was a high number of 'other' responses (14 per cent), the majority of which identified visiting the You Yangs for mountain biking, and some additional responses including to enjoy being in nature, to relax, for conservation and volunteering activities.





The graphic below shows the mode of travel to the precinct, the length of stay, and the group segmentation.



The You Yangs Precinct has potential as the centerpiece of this region. From the Brisbane Ranges to Port Phillip, is a special 'open space' between Geelong and Melbourne, an area of distinctive landscape & heritage.

Respondents were asked whether they purchased any goods and services locally for their most recent trip to the Precinct.

The majority of responses identified that they purchased all, or a combination of, food, beverages and petrol in the local area. Accommodation and mountain bike equipment was also noted.

Testing principles and concepts

The community drop-in sessions and survey focused on broader community discussion and testing draft principles and initial concepts. Feedback on these principles is captured on the following pages.



1

**CULTURALLY
CONNECTED**

The You Yangs Precinct
will recognise and
celebrate its rich and
valued Aboriginal
heritage.

Testing of the opportunities discussed under the theme culturally connected are prioritised from highest to lowest:

HIGHEST

Work with Traditional Owners to provide cultural information and education for visitors to share the history and stories of the Wadawurrung people throughout the You Yangs Precinct

Refresh and add information and interpretive signage relating to cultural stories and significant sites across the You Yangs Precinct

Work with Traditional Owners to establish a cultural walk to connect key locations, using contemporary art

LOWEST

Work with Traditional Owners to develop school and community education tours and programs at both the You Yangs and Serendip Sanctuary to enhance cultural knowledge

Additional opportunities and considerations include:

- Work with Wadawurrung to jointly develop ways of sharing stories and culture, and renaming all elements.
- Café incorporating bush tucker, an Indigenous nursery, and an Aboriginal cultural centre.
- Working with Wadawurrung to support self-determination, employing rangers and visitor interpretation officers from the community, and creating employment for local Aboriginal people.
- Connecting mountain biking and cultural opportunities through trail signage and a 'culture ride' or bike trail.
- Open communication between Wadawurrung and recreation groups to integrate cultural information with information and ensuring minimal impact on cultural sites.
- Improve connection to Wurdi Youang, connect precinct to other remnants via appropriately planned corridors.



2

ENGAGING WITH AND PRESERVING NATURAL ASSETS

The You Yangs Precinct will evolve to accommodate and promote further nature-based visitation, while protecting its environmental values and unique attributes to maintain it as a special place.

Testing of the opportunities discussed the under theme engaging with and preserving natural assets are prioritised from highest to lowest:

HIGHEST

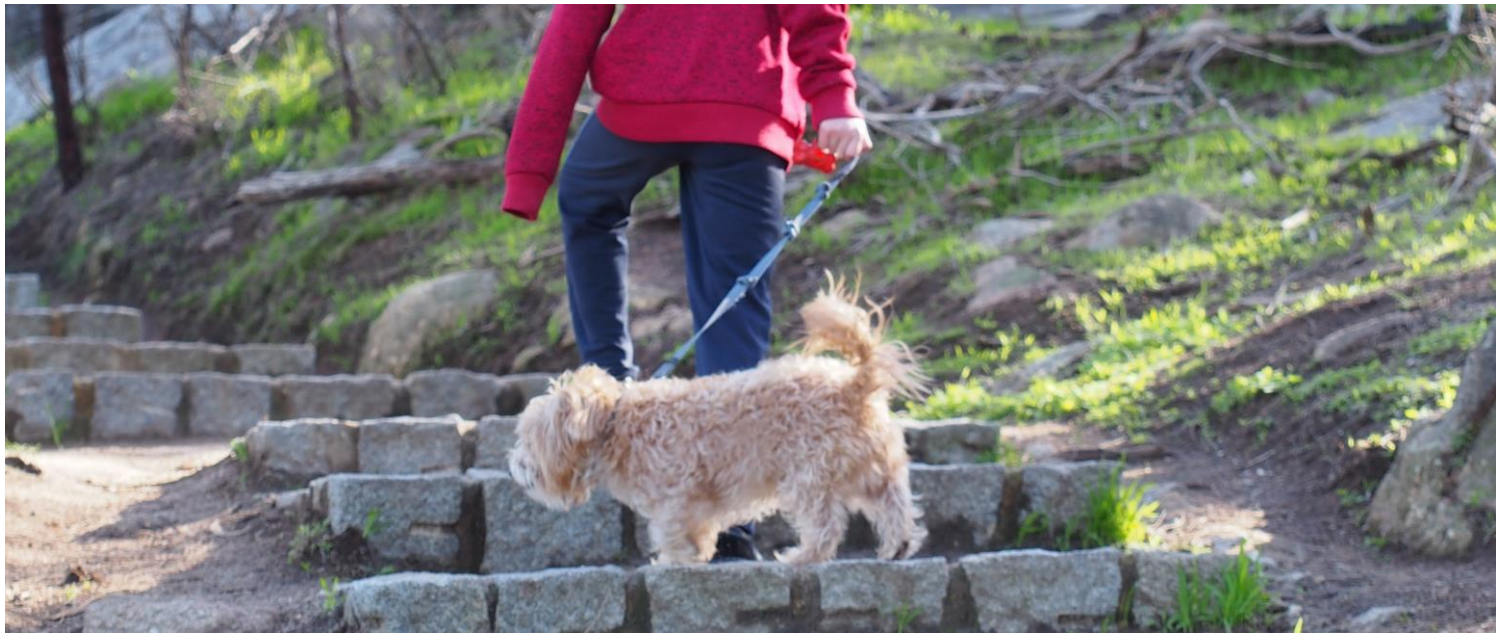
- Improve management of vegetation and presentation of the landscape along key tracks
- Explore protection of wildlife corridors and connection to the broader ecology, including a wildlife protection area in the southeast corner of the You Yangs Regional Park
- Refresh and add information and interpretative signage relating to flora and fauna across the You Yangs Precinct
- Enhance the educational offer and programs at Serendip Sanctuary and You Yangs through formalised coordination with local schools' curriculum

LOWEST

- Expand the Parks Victoria Junior Rangers Program to establish a conservation planting management program at You Yangs Precinct and create a base for the program at Serendip Sanctuary
- Establish an elevated bridge link between the Wetlands Walk and the Wader Walk at Serendip Sanctuary

Additional opportunities and considerations include:

- Site maintenance including weed and pest management, upgrading vehicle access tracks, clearing debris, planting of local species, and upkeep of wildlife habitat.
- Wildlife protection including safe road crossings for animals, monitoring and research, enforcing dogs on-leash rules, more nesting boxes, and expanding breeding of endangered species.
- Partnership opportunities that engage volunteers for maintenance of the site, re-establish partnerships with key environmental groups and provide school groups' conservation programs.



3

QUALITY EXPERIENCES

The You Yangs Precinct will support and improve the existing activities and operations while embracing opportunities to diversify experiences that capture the spirit and stories of the place.

Testing of the opportunities discussed under the theme quality experiences are prioritised from highest to lowest:

HIGHEST

- Improve and upgrading toilets and shower facilities
- Focus on upgrading easily accessible tracks and trails at the You Yangs that connect to existing car parks
- Upgrade the information centre at the You Yangs to create an improved visitor experience, including enhancing cultural heritage celebration and education
- Consider improving or opening up new entries to the You Yangs, including Toyne's Road, to relieve overcrowding of parking areas
- Explore opportunities to reuse the Duck Pond Parsonage and School for a commercial offering, such as a café, bike hire or art gallery
- Expand barbecue facilities at Serendip Sanctuary and consider including a café, encouraging use by facilities and tour groups
- Consider creating children's nature play spaces near picnic facilities at the You Yangs
- Establish an annual events program at Serendip Sanctuary, including community festivals, music events and markets
- Allow vehicle access to Great Circle Drive

LOWEST

- Create a welcome entry to Serendip Sanctuary from Plains Road, and improve signage along Windermere Road
- Prioritise the upgrade of a suitable all-abilities and equitable access walking track, such as the Branding Yard Track
- Upgrade the interpretive education centre at Serendip Sanctuary to meet contemporary visitor experience and cater to both children and adults
- Investigate school camping opportunities at Serendip Sanctuary
- Complement education programs with art classes and studios across the precinct to provide new ways of engaging with the landscape



4

LOCALLY & REGIONALLY CONNECTED

Visitors sense the seamlessness of the journey and connection between the You Yangs Precinct and communities across Greater Geelong, Wyndham and the western region of Victoria.

Testing of the opportunities discussed under the theme locally and regionally connected are prioritised from highest to lowest:

HIGHEST

Establish a safe walking and cycling track that connects Serendip Sanctuary and You Yangs

Provide consistent branding and signage to promote the You Yangs Precinct that is carried through Lara and Little River

Improve connection to surrounding areas of ecological and geological significance

Improve access to walking tracks through Serendip Sanctuary to encourage everyday recreational use

Explore potential public bus stops at the Serendip and You Yangs that connect to the local train stations

LOWEST

Explore opportunities to collaborate with an eco-tourism operator to provide low impact accommodation options (e.g. glamping or small eco-lodge) at Serendip Sanctuary

Explore low impact accommodation options (e.g. glamping or small eco-lodge) within the You Yangs

Additional opportunities and considerations include:

- Branding and multi-lingual signage, including information on wildlife protection, and ecological links between regions.
- Minimal support for glamping and accommodation in the precinct with preference to locate outside boundaries.
- Create connecting trails to Geelong and nearby train stations and develop family-friendly shared bicycle and walking tracks.

Conclusion

This engagement summary provides an overview of what was heard throughout the engagement process from July to October 2019. The information gathered has been used to develop the You Yangs Precinct Draft Master Plan and Business Case.

The engagement process has served to capture the values and ideals of the community and stakeholders interested in, or affected by, the future of the You Yangs Precinct.

Traditional Owners, stakeholders and community will continue to be informed, involved and able to contribute through to delivery to ensure a sense of shared ownership.

Considerations and future engagement include:

- Ensuring aspirations are maintained and incorporated where possible, or communicated effectively where not;
- Setting clear expectations and parameters around projects to be delivered;
- Increasing awareness and support for any future changes;
- Providing opportunities for partnerships to co-deliver initiatives.
- Draft master plan will be released for community feedback.

This may include ongoing engagement activities and initiatives to enable participants to communicate changes and enable stakeholders and community to make informed contributions.

