

Charles Evans Reserve Upgrade

Stage 1 Community Engagement Report



This report details the specifics of the Charles Evans Reserve Stage 1 community engagement and evaluates the participation. The consultation opened on 14 Aug 2023 and was live until 11 Sep 2023.

Background

Charles Evans Reserve is a small park located near the Yarra River in Cremorne. It includes a playground, drinking fountain, garden beds and small grassy area. This park must meet the needs of a diverse and increasing population and accommodate different groups of park users, including residents, visitors and people who work in the local area.

Cremorne has less than 0.5% open space and land for additional open space is not likely to become available in the short term. Additionally, commercial development is drawing new people to the area for work and Cremorne's residential population is also growing.

Why we ran this consultation?

We're upgrading Charles Evans Reserve to make sure the park can serve a broad range of park users for years to come. Before we start developing the Concept Design, we needed to seek feedback from the community to better understand how they want to use this space and what improvements they think we should make.

A key element of this consultation was understanding how the community feels about the existing playground at Charles Evans Reserve and whether they want us to replace it.

Objectives of this engagement

- Inform the community about the plans to upgrade Charles Evans Reserve
- Identify whether there is community support for a formal playground.
- Understand any community concerns around the use of the space.
- Ensure that feedback is received from both residents and people who work in the Cremorne area.
- Identify any particular needs for specific facilities and design elements based on how the community are using the space.

Level of Community influence

- The community could influence whether a dedicated playground is provided in the new design.
- The community could influence what other uses and facilities are provided within the park.
- The community could provide feedback on parts of the park they like and want to preserve.
- The community could provide feedback on issues they thought could be improved.

What did we ask?

Participants were asked:

1. What do you like about Charles Evans Reserve? (open text response)
2. What do you think could be improved about Charles Evans Reserve (open text response)
3. How would you like to use the park? Select all that apply:
 - Eating lunch or having a coffee
 - Working or studying
 - Meeting a friend
 - Spending time with children

- Socialising with a group of people
 - Having a picnic
 - Informal recreation (for example: exercise or ball play)
 - Relaxing and recharging
 - Walking through on my way somewhere
 - Other (please specify)
4. We have the option of: (A) Providing a new dedicated playground to offer a broader range of play opportunities and provide accessible access. This would take up the same or greater amount of space as the existing playground. (B) Providing informal play elements that are integrated throughout the overall design of the park (such as nature play) to enable a more flexible use of the park. Or (C) Removing the playground and not replacing it. Please indicate if you would prefer option A, B, or C for this park.
 5. What's your reason for selecting this option? (this question is optional)
 6. Please rank the following facilities in order of importance to you for this park (rank at least one):
 - Barbeque
 - Drinking fountain
 - Garden beds – feature/decorative
 - Playground – dedicated
 - Play space – informal, sculptural, nature play
 - Seats with tables
 - Social space for small groups
 - Shelter – picnic/shade/rain
 - Trees – native evergreen trees for shade
 - Trees – deciduous trees for summer shade and more light in winter
 - Open grassed area
 7. When do you usually like to visit the park? Select all that apply:
 - Weekday – Morning
 - Weekday – Lunch
 - Weekday – Afternoon
 - Weekday – Evening
 - Weekend – Morning
 - Weekend – Afternoon
 - Weekend – Evening
 8. Do you have any other comments about the proposed upgrade of Charles Evans Reserve? (open text response)

Methods included:

- Online survey
- Two (2) in-person information sessions at the park

Who did we hear from?

Demographic data was collected via the 126 online surveys. 81% of respondents lived in Cremorne, with a further 15% living in Richmond, providing an overwhelmingly local engagement response. 90% of responses were received from people between the ages of 30 and 59. No responses were received by people under the age of 24.

What's your connection to Yarra?	Numbers	Percentage
I live in Yarra	116	92.06%
I work in Yarra	48	38.10%
I visit Yarra	1	0.79%
I study in Yarra	3	2.38%
I own a property or mortgage in Yarra	77	61.11%
I rent in Yarra	20	15.87%
I own a business in Yarra	25	19.84%
What gender do you identify as?	Numbers	Percentage
Man	37	29.37%
Woman	85	67.46%
Self-described	0	0%
I prefer not to say	4	3.17%
What is your age range?	Numbers	Percentage
Under 11	0	0%
12 to 17	0	0%
18 to 24	4	3.17%
25 to 34	30	23.81%
35 to 49	61	48.41%
50 to 59	23	18.25%
60 to 69	7	5.56%

70 to 84	1	0.79%
85 and older	0	0%
What suburb do you live in	Numbers	Percentage
Abbotsford	0	0%
Alphington	0	0%
Burnley	1	0.79%
Carlton North	0	0%
Clifton Hill	0	0%
Collingwood	1	0.79%
Cremorne	102	80.95%
Fairfield	0	0%
Fitzroy	0	0%
Fitzroy North	0	0%
Princes Hill	0	0%
Richmond	19	15.08%
I live outside of Yarra	3	2.38%
Select all that apply. I am.....	Numbers	Percentage
A person living with a disability.	2	1.59%
A member of the LGBTIQA+ community.	10	7.94%
Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.	2	1.59%
None of the above.	106	84.13%
I prefer not to say.	7	5.56%

Engagement Reach

Engagement and Communications Activity

2 x in-person information sessions at the park

Your Say Yarra (YSY) online page

Mail outs to owners and occupiers of residences and businesses in the streets immediately surrounding the parks

Social media posts and ads

Council's email newsletter (Yarra Life)

Your Say Yarra EDM

Targeted emails to stakeholders

What did we hear?

Council received 126 survey contributions during this consultation. The following section provides a summary of responses for each survey question, which have been grouped into themes that will inform the concept design of the park.

What do you like about Charles Evans Reserve? (open text response)

Summary of responses included:

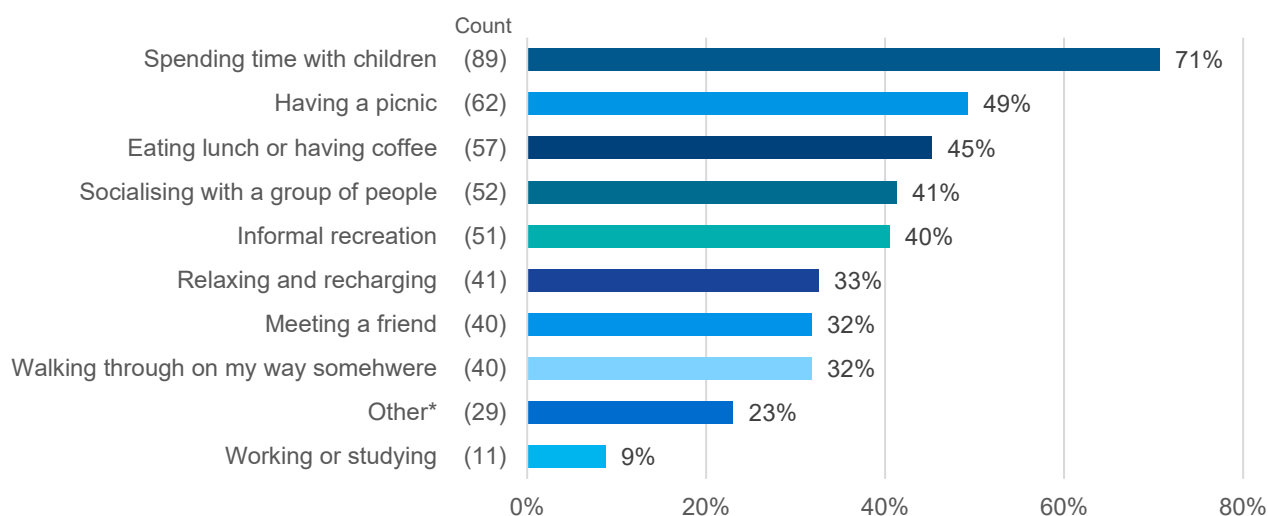
- The playground – it’s only one of two in Cremorne.
- It’s away from roads so it’s safe for children and dogs.
- A space for dogs – nowhere else exists in Cremorne.
- Social & picnicking – especially for residents with small or no yards – *“Our street has its Christmas picnic there”*
- One of the only green spaces in the area
- It’s quiet – despite the freeway noise
- It’s a green space to eat lunch
- You can hear the birds
- The view of the ‘Our Magic Hour’ sign
- It’s cool on a hot day and appreciation of the summer shade
- *“That it exists. Nothing else in the area”*

What do you think could be improved about Charles Evans Reserve? (open text response)

Summary of responses included:

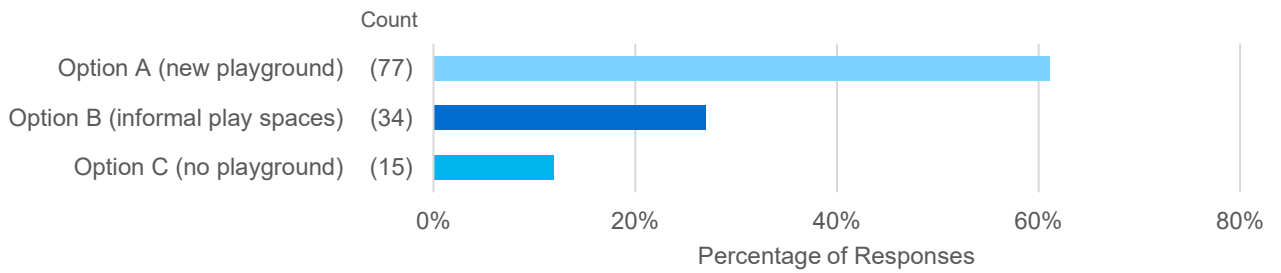
- More seating/tables – common request from residents and office workers alike
- A dedicated off-leash space for dogs:
 - Dog owners letting their dogs off leash is seen as a problem by some – requests for fenced areas to separate kids and dogs, and to stop dogs from toileting in children’s play areas
- Redevelop the playground to cater for a wider age range of children:
 - Requests for nature play elements (e.g., rocky clamber area, sand pit, water elements)
- Things for older children and adults to do as well:
 - 17 requests for a basketball hoop/half court (no others in Cremorne)
 - 17 requests for a BBQ
- Numerous comments about improving the turf, and requests to not take away the lawn area
- Drinking fountain with dog trough
- Lighting at night
- Concerns about lack of sunlight in winter

How would you like to use the park? Select all that apply:



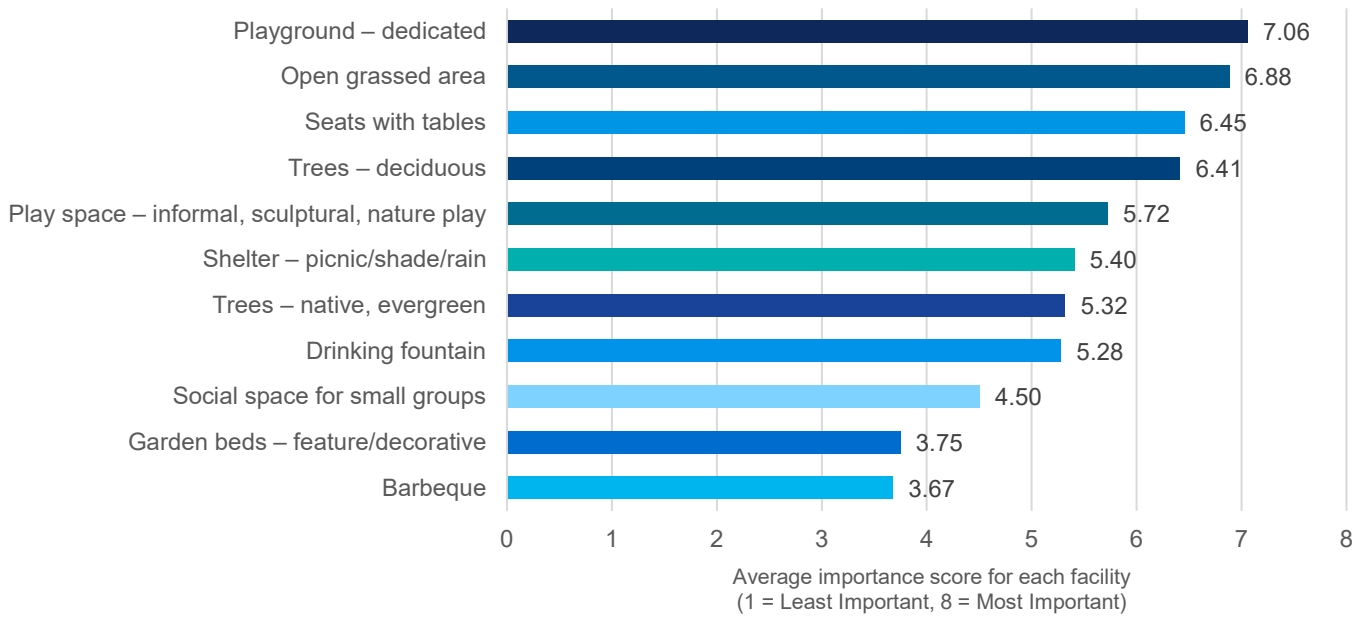
*22 out of the 23 responses that provided additional detail for ‘Other’ said they use the park for dog related activities.

Preferences in regard to the playground:

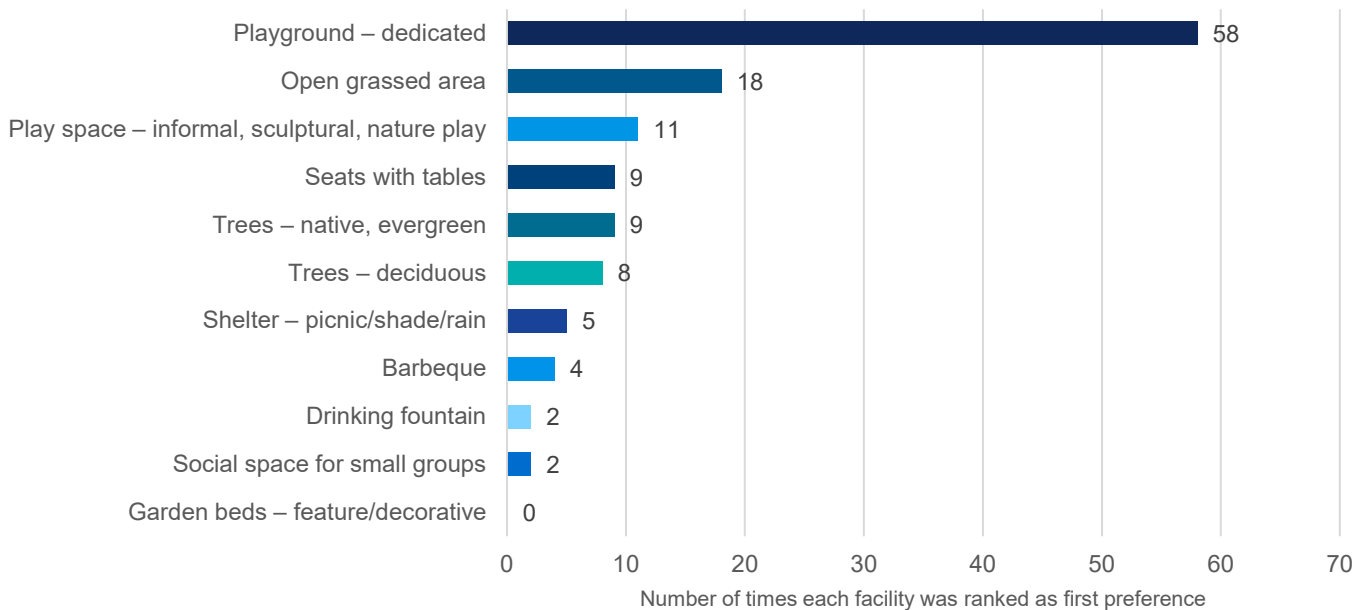


Please rank the following facilities in the order of importance to you for this park (rank at least one)

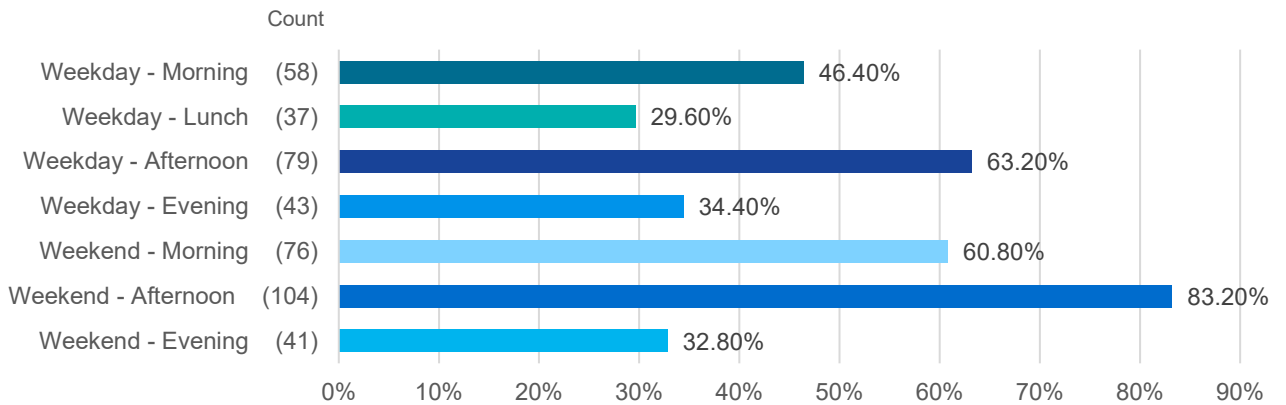
Facility Ranking - Overall Importance



First Preference Count



When do you usually like to visit the park? Select all that apply:



Do you have any other comments about the proposed upgrade of Charles Evans Reserve?

- *“Residents and workers will continue to bring dogs here while there are no other spaces so this must be catered for somehow...”*
- *“Keep the current amenities but upgrade them and offer more seating/tables”*
- *“Don’t take away the playground. There is nowhere to play for kids in Cremorne. We need more green spaces.”*
- *“If Cremorne is going to continue to be a desirable residential area & not a purely industrial one there needs to be dedicated play areas for children & grass for pets”*
- *“Please don’t remove facilities that local people use to accommodate office workers, they don’t live here”*
- *“Please don’t take away from the kids to give to office workers”*
- *“The park needs to stay as a play area for local children and as a quiet space.”*
- *“This is one of 2 playgrounds in Cremorne - upgrade it for kids and go buy some more land for more parks in Cremorne as it is necessary for the ongoing amenity for the residents and offices alike”*
- *“Listen to the community, Cremunity. Keep the playground. Upgrade it, make it the best playground Cremorne has seen!”*
- *“Basketball hoop for school aged kids”*
- *“Making it more dog friendly would be appreciated”*
- *“I’m very excited! I love visiting this park every day and I know many of my friends who have dogs and children love it too. Although focused on the playground, making this park off leash for dogs would really improve life for our dog friends who visit every day too.”*
- *“Don’t stuff it up!”*

Feedback themes that will inform the concept design:

Feedback Theme 1: A Space for Children	
What we heard:	Our response:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It is a safe place for children to play, away from rat-running trucks.”</i> • <i>“I love that the kids have somewhere to freely play in such a built-up high-density area.”</i> • <i>“New play equipment, more play equipment”</i> • <i>“Expand the children’s playground. Provide a half basketball court for older kids - there are no council facilities for older kids in Cremorne.”</i> • <i>“Maybe something for the older kids...a four square or basketball ring...”</i> • <i>“More seating and varied play, including nature play”</i> • <i>“Why can’t you upgrade the playground and add a hoop and more seats then everyone can use it and be happy.”</i> • <i>“It’s one of the few green spaces we have in Cremorne. As most houses in Cremorne don’t have a backyard, it gives kids somewhere to play whether that be on the play equipment or on the grass area.”</i> 	<p>Community desire for an upgraded and dedicated playground is clear. The design for a new playground will consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A larger, or better use of the existing playground footprint) to provide play facilities for a wider age range of children. • In addition to traditional play equipment, nature play elements will be explored. • Improved accessibility • Separation from dogs and traffic – refer to Theme 3. <p>Additionally, the design will explore the possibility of providing a basketball hoop/multi-court for informal ball sports to further broaden the age range of play facilities.</p>
Feedback Theme 2: A Space for Dogs	
What we heard:	Our response:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The only park where I can walk my dog to in Cremorne.”</i> • <i>“Green space for the dog to sniff around and play.”</i> • <i>“...it’s one of the only areas where a lot of dogs particularly in the apartment buildings nearby can go to toilet.”</i> • <i>“It would be beneficial for the locals to have an off-leash area for the dogs.”</i> • <i>“There could be an off-lead space as well as a smaller children playground. This is the only space where locals can bring their dogs and kids”</i> 	<p>Dog walkers/owners formed a large proportion of responses in the survey. The new park design will look at ways to make the park more dog friendly, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the turf area • Incorporating physical separation between dogs, children’s play areas, and traffic – Refer to Theme 3. <p>Unfortunately, Charles Evans Reserve is considered too small to be able to safely accommodate a designated off-leash area, however, this will be considered for future parks in Cremorne.</p>
Feedback Theme 3: Separation of Dogs and Children	
What we heard:	Our response:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I feel the children’s play area should be fenced. I keep my leashed dog off the playground, but many leashed and unleashed dogs urinate on the tanbark and play equipment.”</i> • <i>“A fence around the playground because every single visit my daughter and I both end up with dog poo on our shoes etc as dogs are often off leash and owners do not watch where they are poeing!”</i> 	<p>There is a clear divide between dog owners and parents of small children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog owners appear to be of the opinion that the playground is barely used, and should be downsized or removed to make more space for dogs. • Parents don’t like the number of dogs off-leash, and that they toilet in the tan bark that their children play in.

- *“Fence around playground to separate dogs and children (yes, I know it’s not an off-lead park, but it is used as such so may as well be done safely!)”*
- *“Either create a separate place for dogs to be walked so they don’t destroy the grass or fence a playground area to keep dogs out of the tan bark.”*

It is anticipated that a new, well-considered design can cater for both of these user groups, and will provide an opportunity to reduce conflict.

As mentioned in Themes 1 and 2, allowing for separation of dogs and children will be a key consideration.

Feedback Theme 4: Places to Sit, Eat, and Socialise

What we heard:

- *“Having a nice green space at the end of our street to allow family & friends to gather. The playground provides a great option for families to escape their houses with little or no back yard space, and the general space gives dogs & their owners a place to socialise.”*
- *“Our street has its Christmas picnic there.”*
- *“Keep the current amenities but upgrade them and offer more seating/tables.”*
- *“Upgrade the play area and more seating tables for picnics or just to have a rest.”*
- *“Needs more table and chairs for lunch. Often walk here from nearby office and nowhere to sit and eat properly. Standalone bench seats offer little value beyond taking a phone call when actually trying to use the space. Would love to be able to meet here with friends and staff and congregate properly.”*
- *“More seating, updated play equipment and outdoor lighting.”*
- *“It’s a fantastic place to take kids and a great meeting place to socialize with friends.”*

Our response:

‘Having a picnic’, ‘eating lunch or having coffee’, and ‘socialising with a group of people’ were the second, third, and fourth highest responses for how people would like to use the park (‘Spending time with children’ was the top response and is captured in Theme 1).

The new design will seek to increase the number of seating options provided, including more picnic settings and places to meet in groups.

It is anticipated that these facilities will be able to cater to residents and office workers alike at different times of the week.

Feedback Theme 5: Connection to Nature

What we heard:

- *“...one of the only relatively quiet places in Cremorne where you can hear birds.”*
- *“I like the shady trees. I have attended a local annual BBQ that happens there also so the social aspect I like. It’s cool on a hot day because of the large trees and the grass - please don’t mess with the natural coolth this area offers - e.g. I can imagine a major overhaul where it ends up covering the natural permeability and biodiversity that must be below the ground there!”*
- *“Work around the existing trees - the biodiversity that exists below the ground is important and this should not be disturbed more than absolutely necessary.”*
- *“There is something special about this place and how cool it stays. Please let the natural layers of underground remain in some sections of this place.”*

Our response:

The feedback widely Charles Evans Reserve recognised Charles Evans Reserve as one of the few green spaces in Cremorne, providing important relief to the surrounding high-density built form. As such, the new design will seek to emphasise these natural qualities by:

- Minimising hard surfaces
- Retaining mature existing trees where possible
- Ensuring new tree and plant selection responds to the site and enhances the existing vegetation.

Feedback Theme 6: Fix the Basics

What we heard:	Our response:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Needs a tidy up, new and cleaned seats, BBQ.”</i> • <i>“Have the maintenance people rake the leaves and remove them to assist the grass to grow. If there was a decent coverage of grass it would make the park look 1,000% better at minimal cost while the Council considers the overall redevelopment of the park.”</i> • <i>“The grass needs to have better upkeep. Otherwise, it’s already great.”</i> • <i>“The lawn needs to be reseeded and irrigation system needs to be turned on, so the grass has a chance to grow. A BBQ would be good as well.”</i> • <i>“Fix the plants on the freeway wall - some of them are falling off because the brackets have fallen off.”</i> • <i>“Grass always dies from people walking in it.”</i> 	<p>We received a lot of feedback regarding the existing maintenance of the park. As part of the redesign of the park, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the park’s current maintenance inputs and adjust these as necessary. • Address recurring maintenance issues through appropriate design (for example, redesigning the lawn area to ensure it can tolerate high use and low light). • Avoid design options and materials that require a high degree of ongoing maintenance.

Requests for items that cannot be addressed in the scope of this project:

- We received 8 requests for public toilets at this site. Due to the small size of the park and the high cost of installation, public toilets cannot be accommodated at this location as part of this project.
- We received 6 requests for Council to purchase land to provide additional open spaces in Cremorne. Council acknowledges the lack of open space in Cremorne and is actively seeking opportunities for land acquisition in addition to upgrading Charles Evans Reserve. However, this is a long-term process and the upgrade of Charles Evans Reserve will deliver a short-term improvement to the quality of open space available to the local community.

Evaluating the engagement

Objective	Evaluation
Inform the community about the plans to upgrade Charles Evans Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Your Say Yarra page received 507 visitors. • There were 3,300 impressions across our social media posts and around 37% of visits to the YSY page came from our social media posts. • 33% of visitors spent at least one minute on the YSY page. • Around 4% of visitors to the page contributed to the survey (126 contributions).
Identify whether there is community support for a formal playground.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was strong support for building a new playground to replace the current one, with 61% of contributors supporting this option.
Ensure that feedback is received from both residents and people who work in the Cremorne area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbouring businesses were contacted by email and encouraged to participate in the online survey and attend the pop-up sessions. • 73% of contributors identified as living in Cremorne, with 3.9% identifying as working in Cremorne.

Identify any particular needs for specific facilities and design elements based on how the community are using the space.

- Around 70% of contributors said that they visited the park with children.
- The next most popular options for using the park were having a picnic (49%) and eating lunch or having a coffee (45%).
- All of the facilities that contributors were asked to rank received support. The three facilities that were ranked highest were:
 - Playground (dedicated) – average rank 7.06
 - Open grassed area – average rank 6.88
 - Seats with tables – average rank 6.45
- The data identifies some conflicting priorities and requires further analysis.