



# St Vincent Gardens Playground Upgrade

Community Engagement Summary Report – June 2019

85 Participants

Engagement Dates: 06/05/19 – 02/06/19

Drop-in Sessions: 23/05/19 & 25/05/19



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# Executive summary

The City of Port Phillip is upgrading St Vincent playground as part of the Playground Renewal Program, with an aim to have a green city, with space for everyone to enjoy the outdoors and participate in whatever recreation they prefer.

This document has been compiled following the conclusion of community engagement for the St Vincent Gardens playground upgrade (May-June 2019). Over the engagement period, **85** responses were collected, providing recommendations and comments on the playground and how they engage with the park through the City's online engagement platform - Have Your Say Port Phillip.

Based on the survey questions, the report has been divided into three parts:

**Part 1** – Participant profile and demographics: this section breaks down the user groups and specific information relating to survey responses, including their age, where they live, and their relationship to The City of Port Phillip.

**Part 2** – Using playgrounds and parks: this section looks at how respondents currently use playground facilities in general.

**Part 3** – Transforming St Vincent Gardens: this section analyses what participants had to say about the current state of the playground and what recommendations they had for the redevelopment moving forward.

The information gained from community engagement will be used to improve the design of the park over the next year. There will be additional opportunities for community members to provide feedback at each phase of the design process.

This report has been commissioned by The City of Port Phillip and completed by The Space Agency - an independent consultancy specialising in stakeholder engagement and placemaking. The Space Agency was engaged, as an impartial, external consultant, to review and analyse community feedback in order to identify key themes and recommendations relating to St Vincent Gardens playground upgrades. Every effort has been made by the authors of this document to represent accurately participant feedback and insights.



## Key findings and recommendations

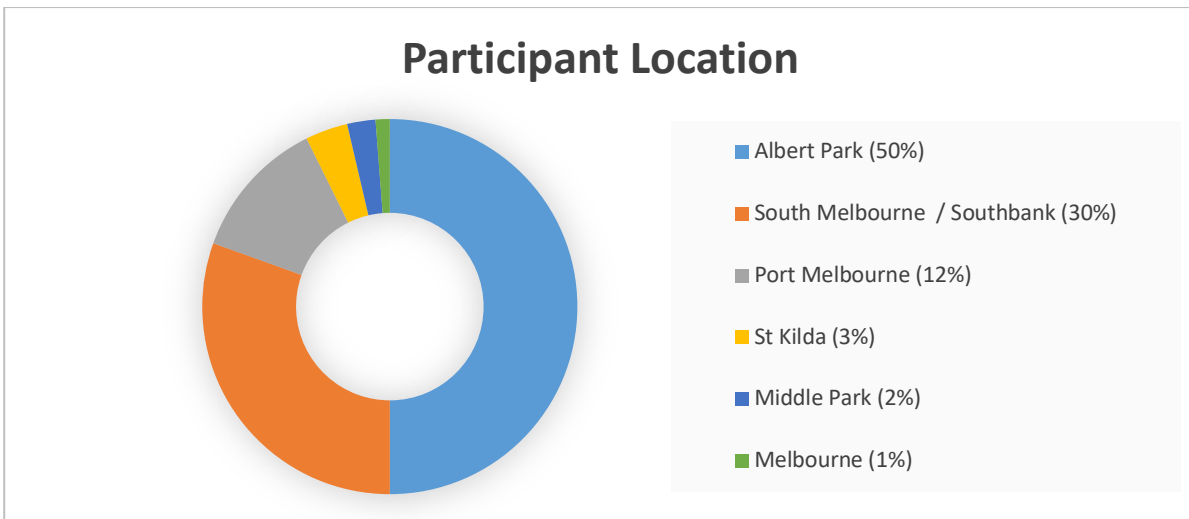
- Over 90% of participants were local residents, with the highest proportion of respondents residing in Albert Park (50%) and South Melbourne / Southbank (30%).
- The majority of respondents were aged between 34 and 54 and females were represented around 15% more in the respondent group.
- More than 80% of respondents had children within their household and these children were predominantly pre-school or primary school aged.
- Increasing diversity in playground equipment to better cater to a range of abilities and ages was important to respondents, and was a recurring trend.
- While often visited for its playground equipment, St Vincents Gardens is a key social space for the local community.
- In detailing how they currently use St Vincent Gardens currently, 79% of respondents listed the playground, 60% said they use it to meet friends, 59% use it for leisure, including activities like relaxing, picnics, reading and connecting to nature, 49% said spending time with the family and 45% use it as a thoroughfare.
- 68% of respondents identified the natural landscape as a special feature, aspect or character important to them at St Vincent Gardens, while 14% mentioned social connection, noting community uses, the friendly and welcoming atmosphere and its function as a gathering point and importance as a site for socialising.
- When asked if there were any elements they would like to keep in the park, 58% of respondents mentioned the play equipment, with strong sentiment to support the large variety of existing equipment and the different ages it catered for.
- A further 35% of respondents included a desire to preserve existing natural landscape, particularly the established trees and open space.
- In response to a question asking what new features or equipment respondents would like to see in the new playground, 56% mentioned new equipment.
- In relation to new equipment respondents would like to see, 35% articulated a desire for more adventurous and challenging equipment like rock walls, ropes, webs, obstacle courses, zip lines and monkey bars for a range of abilities, with 9 responses mentioning exercise equipment for adults.
- Diversity was a key factor in responses about what participants want in a new playground. 26% of responses included suggestions for more inclusive facilities that cater to a wider demographic of users – from toddlers and babies to more challenging equipment for older children.
- Inclusion of greater amenity facilities was another trend mentioned, with responses including BBQ areas, additional shelter like a gazebo or shaded play area that can provide weather protection.
- Embracing the natural environment was also noted as a desired feature, with 12 responses suggesting community gardens, sensory gardens that could be enjoyed by people living with visual impairments and grassy open space for play. Direct reference to introducing more nature-based play and links to nature within the play equipment was also noted in 9 responses.
- Reflecting on any features they did not like or would like to see changed, 31% of respondents mentioned equipment, citing bench and seating shortages, a lack of diversity

and play equipment for older children and an appropriate place to leave prams without blocking thoroughfares. Other trends in these responses were mention of toilets – 25% stated a desire for upgrade to bathroom facilities – and cleanliness, with management of rubbish and bin collection raised by 20% of respondents.

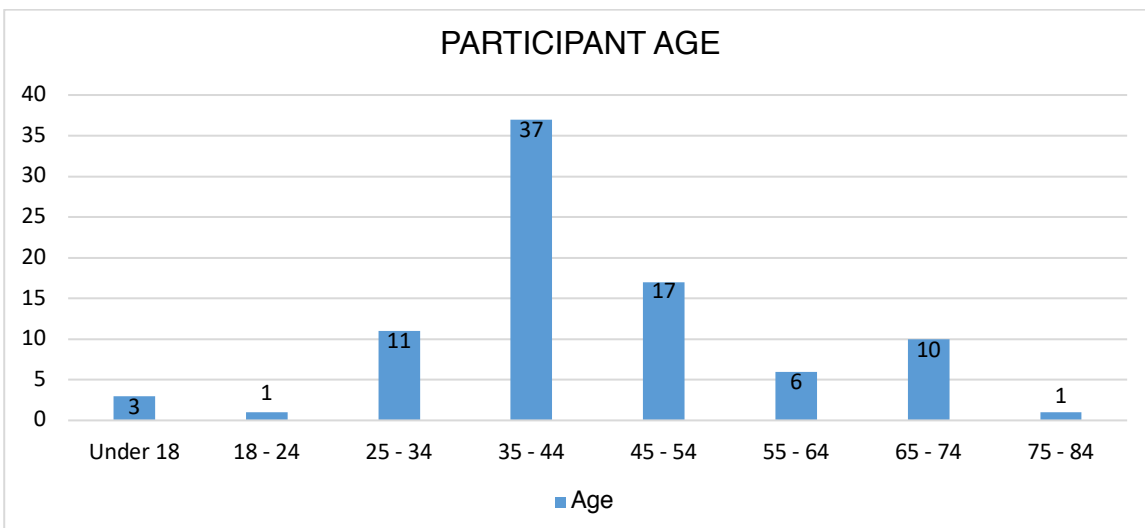
- In an upgraded playground, respondents most wanted to see improvements to increase appeal for a wider range of ages and abilities.

# Part 1 – Participant profile and demographics

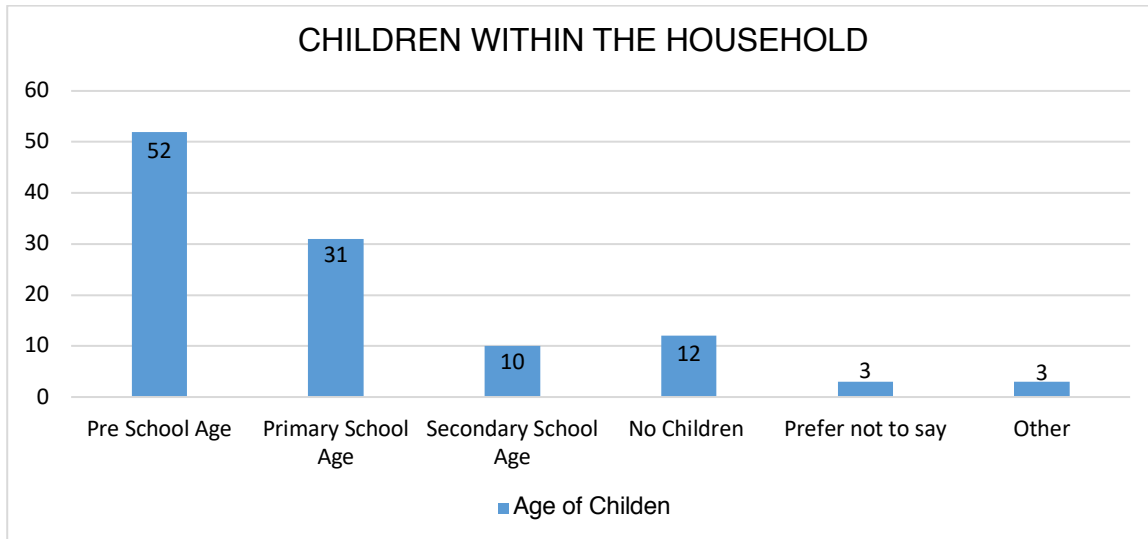
Over **90%** of participants said they lived in the area. Of these, the top suburb was Albert Park, where **41 (50%)** of responses said they lived. The next top response was South Melbourne / Southbank with **25** responses. Remaining suburbs included Port Melbourne (**10**), St Kilda (**3**), Middle Park (**2**) and with **1** response also from Melbourne. All participants responded when asked if they would like to hear more about the project. **59** participants (**70%**) responded positively, requesting to hear more as the project unfolds.



The engagement was successful in gathering data from diverse age groups. However, the majority (**50%**) of participants were aged between 35 and 55 years old. Overall, more women took part in the engagement compared to men – the split was **65% / 34%**.



Participants were mainly families with kids. Over **80%** of participants stated that they have children living in their household. This includes **60%** of participants with pre-school aged children, and a further **37%** with primary school aged children in their household. The lowest category of children within their household was those of secondary school age (13-17).



# Part 2 – Using playgrounds and parks

Thinking about the last time you enjoyed using a playground, what made it great?

A total of **72 (N)** participants engaged with this question, generating **157** responses which spanned across **5** key themes; equipment, diversity, amenity, safety and landscaping.

Theme	Recommendations	% of N	Recommendations
Equipment	45	62%	<p>A strong association between playgrounds and their equipment was noted, with <b>45</b> responses attributing the various forms of equipment to their enjoyable experiences. Within these responses, participants tended to place focus on general structures which encouraged play, including specific mentions of elements such as swings, flying foxes, slides and sandpits, as evidenced in the below participant response;</p> <p><i>“I adore natural wooden equipment, spaces with lots of areas to climb, run, hide and play! Children also love swings and slides. The less plastic the better!”</i></p> <p>Additionally, water play activities for summer were mentioned within <b>8</b> responses, while a further <b>2</b> responses detailed skate parks as being an appreciated addition.</p> <p>In contrast, <b>3</b> responses noted that they enjoyed using playgrounds as a form of outdoor exercise.</p>
Diversity	34	47%	<p>Diverse and inclusive playgrounds which catered for all ages and abilities were found to be an important factor amongst participants, making up <b>47%</b> of the total responses. <b>12</b> responses commented on separate play spaces for different ages, with <b>4</b> responses specifically highlighting age appropriate</p>

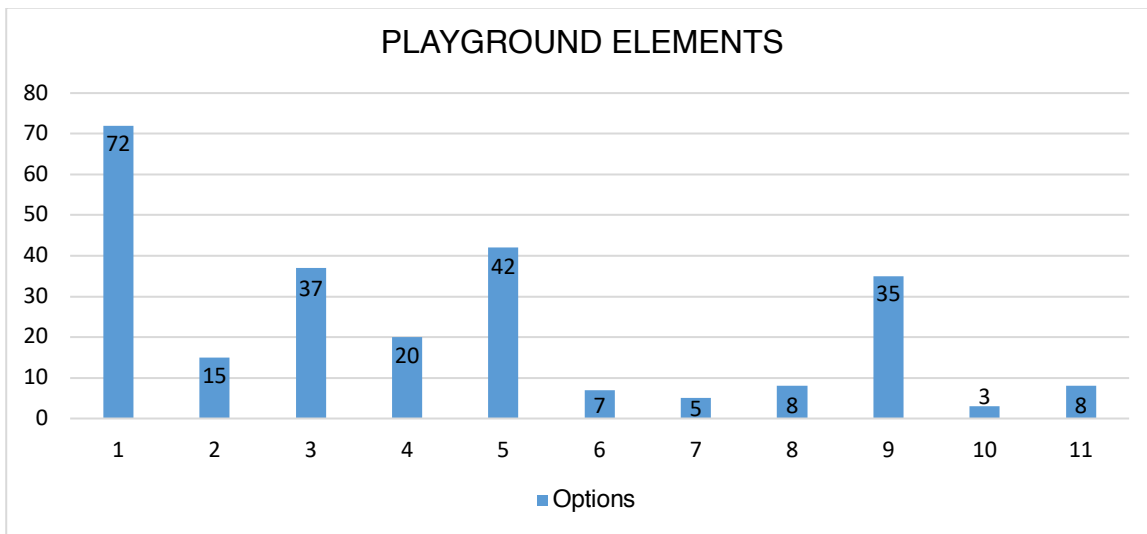


			<p>equipment especially for toddlers and younger children. One participant wrote;</p> <p><i>“The beautiful grounds and feeling like you are outdoors within your community. Play equipment that is engaging for the young ones however having a family that contains older children it is always difficult to find a park that engages all. And this is a downside in many parks. Little kids turn into big kids!”</i></p>
Amenity	26	36%	<p><b>36%</b> of the total responses highlighted various amenities as being key to an enjoyable playground experience. Elements included waste bins, toilet and bathroom facilities and drinking water taps. Particular focus was placed on protection from the natural elements with <b>17</b> responses mentioning shade and covered areas. <b>7</b> responses detailed satisfaction gained from BBQ and picnic areas with <b>8</b> responses mentioning them. As well as this, participants focused on benches particularly in reference to providing a place for parents to sit, as detailed in the below participant response;</p> <p><i>“Benches &amp; tables for parents (especially good for the kids parties) [and] drink fountain for parents &amp; kids.”</i></p>
Safety	24	33%	<p>Safety and security in and around the playground was mentioned in <b>33%</b> of the total responses, with <b>6</b> responses detailing fences, gates and enclosed play areas for the children. A further <b>6</b> responses placed particular emphasis on sightlines and the ability for parents to be able to see their children at all times. One participant responded;</p> <p><i>“Well thought out space, safe for children.”</i></p>
Landscaping	21	29%	<p><b>21</b> responses covered various landscaping elements, with <b>6</b> responses detailing playgrounds surrounded by well-manicured gardens and <b>5</b> responses mentioning satisfaction with open space for children to run and play. <b>50%</b> of the total responses within this theme noted that trees were an important</p>

			<p>aspect for climbing, shade and aesthetic purposes. One of the <b>10</b> responses mentioning trees is as follows;</p> <p><i>“Trees. I love trees that provide good shade coverage. Trees for climbing. Trees for encouraging wild birds to show the kids...”</i></p>
Other	7	9%	<p>7 responses that fell outside of the above categories included comments which did not address the question and suggested a misunderstanding, as well as a few responses detailing experience based elements rather than physical qualities of a space, as demonstrated in one participant’s response below;</p> <p><i>“Creating adventures with friends.”</i></p>

## What do you consider important when choosing to visit a playground?

**84 (N)** participants responded to this multiple-choice question. The most popular choice was a variety of play options, with **85%** of participants selecting this option. Other top selections included having toilets and bathrooms available (**42**), green spaces and trees (**37**) and the provision of shade and weather cover (**35**). These top selections reflect themes identified in question one (in particular equipment, amenity and landscaping), which highlight what participants expressed as key features they enjoyed when last visiting a playground.



No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	A variety of play options (playground equipment for all ages, space to run, and space to relax)	72	85%
2	Spaces to meet and socialise	15	17%
3	Green spaces and trees	37	44%
4	Nature-based play (such as rocks and logs)	20	23%
5	Public bathrooms available	42	50%
6	Open space for exercise	7	8%
7	Spaces to relax and enjoy nature	5	5%
8	Drinking fountains available	8	9%
9	Shade and weather cover	35	41%
10	Spaces that have cultural significance	3	3%
11	Other	8	9%

# Part 3 – Transforming St Vincent Gardens

Are there any elements of the existing playground that you would like to keep?

A total of **73 (N)** participants engaged with this question, generating **95** responses. Responses in this section matched with the five themes established in question one, with participants commenting on the equipment, landscaping and amenity; however, no responses were collected for safety or diversity. In addition, 15% of participants said the park needed a complete make-over, while 6% said that it was fine as-is.

Theme	Recommendations	% of N	Recommendations
Equipment	43	58%	<p>The majority of responses for this question centred on the existing playground, with <b>43</b> responses praising the current play equipment, including a few mentions of the flying fox, the monkey bars and the ramp. In particular, <b>24</b> responses mentioned the swings and <b>17</b> responses asked for the slides to be retained.</p> <p>It was also noted that participants placed a strong emphasis on the large variety of existing equipment and the different ages it catered for as outlined in one participant’s response shown below;</p> <p><i>“I love the mix of equipment for big kids and little kids within eyesight of each other - means siblings can play at the same time. The massive trees are lovely. The version of seesaws (swinging poles) is ace - all the kids love it! The ramp is great for all accessibilities and also means wee brothers and sisters can wander up to join bigger kids or roll their toys down it.”</i></p>
Landscaping	26	35%	<p><b>35%</b> of the total responses included a want to keep and preserve the existing natural landscape and greenery surrounding St Vincent Gardens playground, with <b>7</b> responses</p>

			<p>identifying the open space as a crucial element of the site. It was noted that almost all of the responses for this theme nominated the trees, with <b>20</b> responses asking for them to be left untouched, as evidenced in the below participant response;</p> <p><i>“The large trees that provide shade.”</i></p>
Complete Make-over	11	15%	<p><b>11</b> responses felt that the current playground facilities were in need of a complete overhaul and update as they thought it was tired, old and rundown. One participant wrote;</p> <p><i>“No the playground is tired and unimaginative.”</i></p>
Amenity	6	8%	<p>It was noted that the current amenity was deemed satisfactory due to the mention of the existing accessible bathroom facilities as an important feature to retain across all <b>6</b> responses, though <b>1</b> response did mention they could use an upgrade. One participant wrote;</p> <p><i>“Keep all of the existing playground equipment, the space around it, the nearby toilets, and the nearby water fountain.”</i></p>
As is	5	6%	<p><b>6%</b> of the total collected responses nominated that the playground was good as it is and that everything should be kept and merely expanded upon or fixed where necessary, as shown in the below participant’s response;</p> <p><i>“Yes - it is currently very good. Keep all of it and add more.”</i></p>
Other	4	5%	<p><b>4</b> responses were marked as ‘other’ as they did not relate to actionable recommendations for the park.</p>

## What new features or equipment would you like to see in the new playground?

**110** responses were collected from **75 (N)** participants relating to the possible new features and equipment. These have been categorised into the following **5** key themes; equipment, diversity, amenity, landscaping and safety.

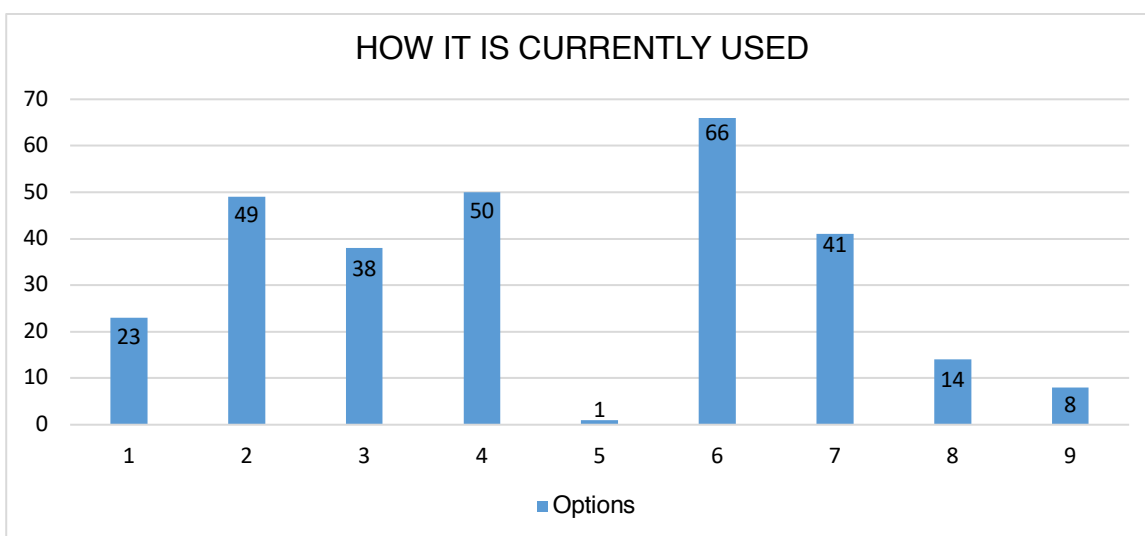
Theme	Recommendations	% of N	Recommendations
Equipment	56	74%	<p>New equipment was noted as being the most popular request for the project, with <b>56</b> responses calling for swings, sandpits and see saws, with some asking for more adventurous and challenging features to stimulate the older children, such as obstacle courses, zip lines, and monkey bars. <b>6</b> responses suggested water play facilities, while <b>20</b> responses recommended various objects to encourage climbing such as rock walls, ropes and webs for different abilities. One participant suggested the following;</p> <p><i>“Some imaginative things, eg bit more play area for playing shop, house, some ride on stuff - eg motorbike. Those could be upgraded. Perhaps a small fairy type house...”</i></p> <p>While most responses for this question focused on children, it was noted that <b>9</b> responses mentioned a want for exercise equipment, particularly targeting adults.</p>
Diversity	20	26%	<p>Once again, the diversity of the playground was noted as an important consideration for participants, with <b>26%</b> of responses suggesting more inclusive and age-appropriate equipment which caters for a wider demographic of users. <b>5</b> responses specifically asked for more toddler and baby friendly play facilities, while <b>7</b> responses felt that the older children needed to be targeted and encouraged to use the park more often through the addition of more challenging equipment. One participant requested the following;</p>



			<p><i>"I'd like to see more challenging play equipment for older children like Royal Park Nature Playground in Parkville. The younger children are well catered for but older kids are losing interest in the playground and that's a big shame because if there's something fun and challenging then they will be more interested in playing outside with friends."</i></p>
Amenity	17	22%	<p><b>17</b> responses suggested the inclusion of more amenity facilities within the space, with <b>4</b> responses requesting BBQ areas and another <b>4</b> responses recommending more shelter or a gazebo to protect users from wet weather and provide additional shade from the sun, as evidenced in one participant's response shown below;</p> <p><i>"Play area is used for birthday parties etc...would be great if there was additional weather protection."</i></p>
Landscaping	12	16%	<p>Embracing the natural environment was noted as a desired feature with <b>12</b> responses suggesting various inclusions of community gardens and sensory gardens for the visually impaired, as well as more grassy areas for open play. <b>9</b> responses specifically detailed the want for more nature based play, by including natural elements into the play equipment, as evidenced in the following participant's response;</p> <p><i>"...Integrate the playground with a nature theme a little more (love the design at Lyell Street Playground)."</i></p>
Safety	4	5%	<p><b>4</b> responses covered recommendations designed to enhance the safety and security of the playground, including gates, fences, an adherence to updated safety standards and, <i>"better lighting."</i></p>
Other	1	1%	<p><b>1</b> response did not fit into any of the above themes and simple read, <i>"nil"</i>.</p>

## How do you use St Vincent Gardens now?

**83 (N)** participants detailed how they use St Vincent Gardens. The playground was the top selected option, with **79%** of participants selecting this option. Other top selections included using St Vincent Gardens as a place for meeting friends (**60%**), using the space for leisure including relaxing, having a picnic, reading and connecting to nature (**59%**) and spending time with the family (**49%**). These top three responses all reflect the space being used by multiple age groups and as a social space for members of the family and community. Using the space for work or studying only collected **1** response which again reinstates that St Vincent Gardens playground is a space used primarily for socialising and gathering.



No	Options	Responses	Percentage
1	Exercise (running, walking, cycling)	23	27%
2	Leisure (relaxing, picnic, reading, connecting to nature)	49	59%
3	Thoroughfare (getting from one place to another)	38	45%
4	Meet with friends	50	60%
5	Work or study in the park	1	1%
6	Playground	66	79%
7	Spend time with the family	41	49%
8	Walk my dog	14	16%
9	Other	8	9%

## Does St Vincent Gardens have a special feature, aspect or character that is important to you?

This question asked participants to identify any existing features or aspects of St Vincent Gardens that were personally significant and resonated with them. A total of **69** participants responded **73** recommendations. These spanned across **3** key themes; landscaping, social connections and equipment.

Theme	Number	Percentage	Recommendations
Landscaping	47	68%	<p>For the majority of responses, the natural landscape that St Vincent Gardens has to offer seemed to resonate strongly with participants, with <b>68%</b> describing the open space, the garden beds and the historical vegetation. Of the <b>47</b> total responses within this theme, <b>25</b> commented on their connection and appreciation for the tall trees and their ability to provide shade, fresh produce, and beauty. <b>8</b> responses nominated the flowers and <b>6</b> responses mentioned the large grassy areas as a key component of the playgrounds character. One participant wrote;</p> <p><i>“The plantings in the flower beds are extra special because we get to see them change throughout the year. The children also love all the trees that produce fruit like the olive tree and crab apple tree. They marvel at the fruit growing each season.”</i></p>
Social Connections	10	14%	<p>It was noted that social connections – including socialising, events, and community uses was a significant feature of the playground and park due to its position, with <b>10</b> responses describing it as a family friendly and welcoming space. <b>7</b> of these responses identified St Vincent Gardens as a gathering point which encouraged social connections and allowed users to meet new people. One participant commented the following;</p> <p><i>“Very special park to the residents and visitors. So beautiful. Party central in the summer. Great meeting for larger groups.”</i></p>

Equipment	9	13%	<p><b>13%</b> of the total responses for this question nominated the play equipment as an important element due to the enjoyment it brought to their children and families, as noted within the below participant’s response;</p> <p><i>“The playground is great for adult exercise in the early morning and kid use all the rest of the time.”</i></p>
Other	7	10%	<p><b>7</b> responses were categorised as other, and included <b>4</b> responses which simply said “no”. The other <b>3</b> responses were unable to fit within any of the above categories and included the heritage setting and low key feel of the space, as well as, <i>“the opportunity to walk through without there being gates.”</i></p>

## Is there anything you don’t like about St Vincent Gardens now? Are there any specific ways in which you would like to see it changed?

When asked if there are any features that participants did not like about St Vincent Gardens currently, **93** responses were gathered from **72 (N)** participant answers and categorised into the following **4** categories; equipment, toilets, general amenity and roads and safety. These themes as well as a few responses which didn’t fit into any of the aforementioned categories have been explored in the table below.

Theme	Recommendations	% of N	Recommendations
Equipment	29	31%	<p>Within the category of equipment, the main issues that were raised by participants included <b>11</b> comments on the lack of seating and benches, <b>6</b> comments on the playground equipment, which focused on the lack of diversity and equipment for older children, and <b>4</b> comments relating to safe spaces for mothers to leave their prams while watching other children play, without blocking the thoroughfares.</p> <p>One participant also raised concerns about the placement of the playground saying:</p>

			<p>“The play space for younger children is positioned under the oak trees, which deposit acorns (choking hazards) all around the area.”</p>
Toilets	24	25%	<p>The second highest response relating to what participants do not like about St Vincent Gardens now are the toilet facilities. Within this category, <b>11</b> participants reflected that they need an upgrade, with <b>1</b> participant emphasising that they should be completely redone. Another participant felt the toilets were dark and spooky. This was also reflected by <b>7</b> participant comments who felt the toilets were poorly lit. One participant also felt the toilets were unsafe for children with disabilities commenting:</p> <p><i>“I would like the bathrooms redone, it's not very accessible for children with disabilities or for older kids..”</i></p>
Amenity	19	20%	<p>The main issue raised within this category was the cleanliness and timing of the rubbish bin collection and emptying, with <b>7</b> comments relating to litter and the bins within the playground. One participant commented</p> <p><i>“Better bin surrounds for both recycling and waste.”</i></p> <p><b>3</b> participant comments reflected the need for a general refresh and overall update to the playground, thus reflecting that there was no individual element they did not like, however felt the playground was dated.</p>
Roads and Safety	11	11%	<p>Of the <b>11</b> comments relating to the roads, access and safety of St Vincent Gardens, <b>6</b> were in favour of the addition of a gate or fence around the playground as they felt the current open access was unsafe for young children. A further <b>3</b> responses reflected that participants did not like the current access for pedestrians accessing the playground, with one commenting:</p>

			<p><i>“...crossing the road near the playground can be a challenge! cars fly around the corner and people unfamiliar with the road don't know where to give way. it's hard to see oncoming traffic.”</i></p>
Other	10	10%	<p>Of the <b>10</b> responses that did not fit into the above categories, <b>6</b> comments reflected that participants did not want anything changed, with one participant saying:</p> <p><i>“No not that I have noticed.”</i></p>

## What is your vision for the upgraded playground? How do you want to see the space being used?

**86** responses were gathered from **67 (N)** participants. These responses have been categorised into the following **5** themes: Diversity, equipment, safety, landscaping, and keeping as is. These themes have been explored in the table below.

Theme	Recommendations	% of N	Recommendations
Diversity	29	43%	<p>As the top theme for this question, diversity means providing something for everyone, including the provision of spaces for the entire family to enjoy. In particular, catering to the needs of children of different ages was a high response within this theme, gathering <b>19</b> comments.</p> <p>This theme highlighted the communities want for the upgrade to the playground to create a space for families, children of all ages and those with disabilities as reflected by one participant who said the space should be</p> <p><i>“Inclusive for children with disability...Multi-sensory input.”</i></p>



Equipment	27	40%	<p><b>27</b> responses included updating, expanding and replacing the play equipment with calls to make it more stimulating, cohesive and exciting. Some participants felt that the playground needed to be designed in a way which invited children and youth of differing ages to run wild with their imagination. <b>2</b> responses in particular suggested that the character and surroundings of St Vincent Gardens should all be left the same, with the existing equipment being the only exception. One participant envisioned;</p> <p><i>“A modern, fun playground which can be utilised by many children concurrently to develop co-ordination and motor skills.”</i></p>
Safety	13	19%	<p>Safety was noted to be a key criteria for participants, with 19% of the total responses mentioning the want for a safe space that children could use freely and at times, independently. Many of these responses emphasised the want for children to feel welcome within the playground and equally for parents to feel comfortable with them being there, as evidenced in one participant’s response shown below;</p> <p><i>“I want to see a space kids love to come and play independently. That parents feel safe for their kids to have some freedom and meet children their own age.”</i></p>
Landscaping	13	19%	<p>This theme received the same number of responses as those relating to safety. Comments relating to the landscaping focused on nature and in the form of nature play (<b>4</b> comments), increased gardens and planting (<b>5</b> comments), and one participant reflecting that the colours colours being used within the design are natural and reflect the environment.</p> <p><i>“Connect with nature...climbing opportunities”</i></p> <p>Other comments within this category related to dog walking areas and open space for families to sit and gather.</p>

As is	4	5%	<p><b>5%</b> of the total collected responses commented that the playground was good as it is and that they were happy with how it was currently being used, as shown in the below participant's response;</p> <p><i>“Happy for it to be used in the future much the same as it is now but with some improvement in rubbish bin provision and collection.”</i></p>
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