

# Ercildoune Estate

## Phase 2 Report

City of Casey Council

July 2020

Prepared by Conversation Caravan



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# Introduction

Conversation Caravan was engaged by the City of Casey Council to support the community and stakeholder engagement of Ercildoune Reserve and Homestead in Cranbourne East. Stage 3 focused on understanding the level of community support for a landscape plan developed by the City of Casey for the site. The plan included ideas and concepts proposed by the community within Stage 1 of the engagement. The plan prioritised maintaining local vegetation and greenspace whilst adding connections to the heritage-listed homestead. The plan incorporates a play space for local children and covered seating arrangements for locals to enjoy the scenery. Refer to Diagram 1 to see the draft Landscape Plan tested.

Diagram 1 Landscape Plan



Participants were asked a series of questions relating to the proposed plan to determine which ideas were supported or needed further refinement. The survey was also used to differentiate feedback from users with different relationships to the site, such as residents from Windward Estate which overlooks the site.

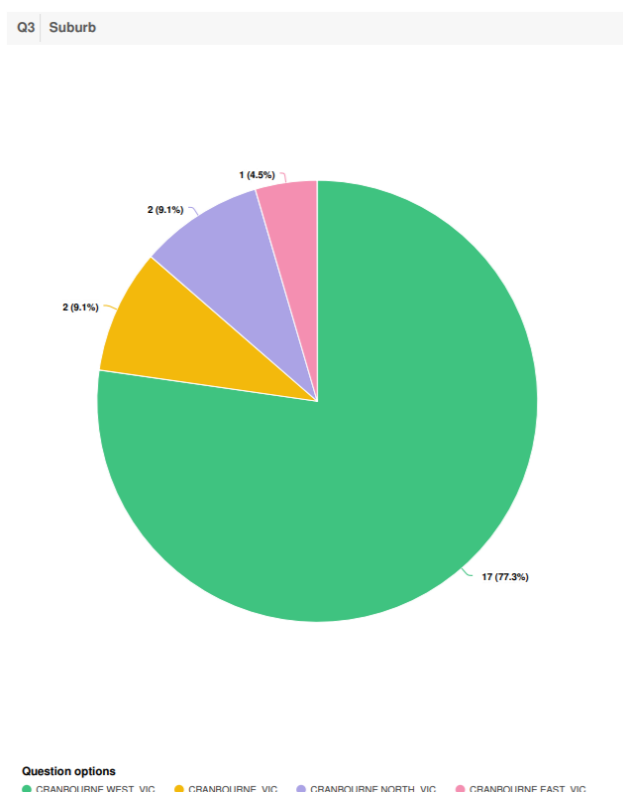


Online engagement was conducted between 1 June 2020 and 26 June 2020. A significant period of time split the different stages of engagement due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures put into place across Australia.

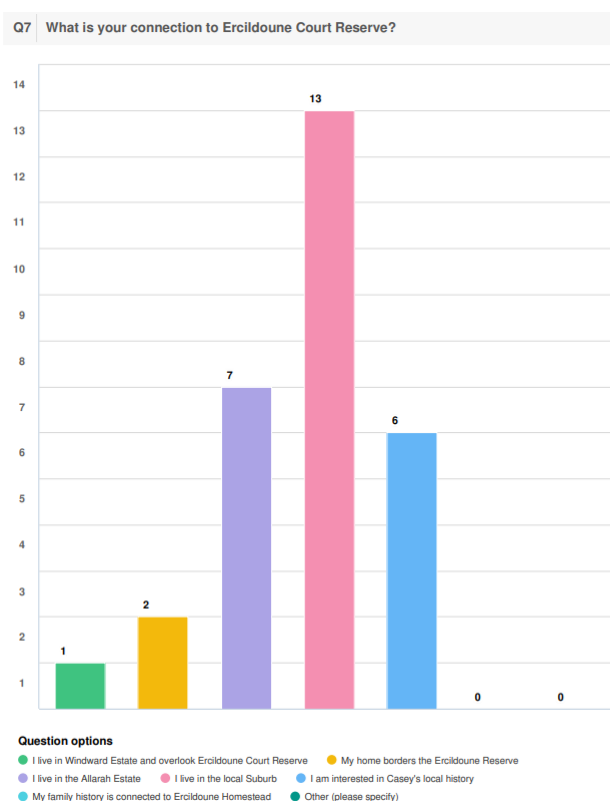
Online participation resulted in 22 individual submissions with 45 visitors to the project page for stage 2. Across stages one and two combined a total of 55 participants engaged with consultation, 484 were informed on the project, being educated through document downloads, video views and the like, and 1571 people were aware of the project, visiting at least one page related to the project.

Diagrams 2 and 3 show the representation of participants based on suburb and connection to Ercildoune Estate. The project attract high levels of interest from Cranbourne West, however was lacking in participation from Windward Estate.

**Diagram 2 Suburb**



**Diagram 3 Connection to the site**



# Key Findings

Participants for this engagement were able to fill out an online survey on the proposed site plan for Ercildoune Estate. Questions were posed to help ascertain whether the proposed changes were suitable, needed adjustment or required change.

## Views of the Dandenong Ranges

Participants were asked whether retaining the foliage currently onsite or creating a view to the dandenong ranges was of higher priority. The majority of participants, 63% (14) believed the foliage and additional planting was more important to the site. A smaller proportion, 22% of participants, (5) opted for a more open view, with the remaining participants suggesting other options such as additional screening.

Listed here are comments in favour of retaining or increasing vegetation.

- “I agree that existing trees should be prioritised, as they are beautiful and provide great shade coverage, so access to the site should be based on this. I don't think the clearer views is necessary.”
- “Established trees are beautiful and provide shade and character. Also, give a sense of privacy when you are there. Keep them.”
- “no, I quite like the idea of a tree-lined path. ... more planting along the pathway of native shrubs, Preferably something that would have grown here before we cleared it and would give smaller birds a place to shelter and nest.”
- “Prefer the trees, add to the look / appeal of the homestead.”

## Site Heritage

Participants suggested that the homestead itself was the most important part of the heritage of the site as it is the only remaining structure. The history of the owners of the homestead and the materials of the building were also mentioned. Restoration of the homestead was another suggestion.

Some participant suggestions to reflect the heritage of the site and area include:

- “Acknowledgement of the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land and incorporation of Indigenous plants in the landscaping.”
- “I would like my children to learn about history, so small plaques with information and or imagery would be great.”
- “Maybe some signage of the history so locals can learn?”
- “Definitely some historical information added.”
- “(Due to heritage)... having a vegetable patch and maybe fruit trees would be great, ... sub-letting to people who would like to grow produce but don't have a garden. I would also be interested to see if maybe we could incorporate beehives.”



- “Would prefer the homestead was restored and space retained as is, it's beautiful as it is!”



## Additional Pathways

Pathways proposed in the landscape plan to access the site were overall deemed insufficient by the majority of participants. Along Ercildoune court near Windward Lane saw 72% of participants (16) request additional pathing into the site. All other surveyed boundaries had a majority requesting additional pathways see Diagram 4.

One participant contributed that the entryways are currently awkward, due to the uphill nature and are unclear. They requested that regardless of what is done, minimalist signage to identify proper traversal into and through the site would be required.

Additional comments in support of increased pathways:

“(pathways make).. it is easier to get to and clear pathways are set so nature doesn’t get disrupted.”

“Love to see is easy access ... for people with mobility issues. Wheelchair friendly paths, smooth, even, concrete for elderly, wide enough for a wheelchair to fit comfortably. We need to do better with that in Casey”.

**Diagram 4 Consideration of Additional Pathways**

**Q9 Do we need to consider additional paved pathways at any of these entry points?**



## Opportunities for Play

Participants were asked what additional opportunities for play they would like to see within the estate. A majority of participants, 72% (16) agreed that playful pathways would be a welcome addition. A large proportion of participants, 54% (12) suggested imaginative art could be implemented in the plan and 45% (10) thought that social games such as table tennis or chess could be included.

Participants provided feedback on different arrangements of play that could be applicable to the site.

- “A giant outdoor chess board, naughts and crosses or adult mindfulness walk/garden.”
- “Yes. Perhaps some outdoor games from the 1800’s when this house was built.”
- “I feel that play equipment will detract from the site, a mountain of metal and plastic is unappealing and the use of fences and boundaries should only be reserved for private areas.”
- “Any play space should be subtle and within the theme of the designs.”
- “I love seeing natural play spaces - rocks to climb and bushes to hide in as well as interactive opportunities (eg. That encourages the use of imagination or can be manipulated by the children).”
- “Yes - not designating TOO much land towards another playground, as the estate and surrounding area are already abundant with playgrounds. Keeping lush green lawn areas ... would preserve the homestead property well, reduce crime, vandalism, people using the area when they shouldn’t be (at night) etc.”
- “Please no gaudy plastic play equipment... speak with local carpentry and men’s shed places... (include) old-time play areas that would be in keeping with the feel of the area.”
- “Seating areas that can be used for laying back, so you can lay back and read a book, or listen to music in the sun. Or have your back up with your legs out straight.”

Whilst ideas for additions to the site were discussed, participants were also fearful that too much site development would attract people from outside the estate, and thus create too much noise and traffic pollution for the neighbourhood.



## Lighting

When asked if lighting would encourage the use of the estate at dusk and dawn, 72% of participants (16) answered that it would. Of those that answered yes 50% (8) stated that festival lighting or lighting embedded into the trees would be their preferred choice. Soft natural lighting was the second most preferred option with 25% (4) participants selecting this option.

## Green Space

A vast majority of participants, 90% (20) agreed that the plan maintained enough green space on the site. Comments in support of retaining and enhancing green space:

- “Plenty of trees being retained and new areas planned!”
- “Seems to incorporate a range of opportunities for use of green space - good variety”
- “Yes as long as it’s natives.”
- “Looking at the property as a local, the land feels bare and too much flat green open detracts from the mystery of a "secret" or "hidden" homestead. It appears uninviting and vacant. (Provide) ... an inviting space to visit it also requires a bit of privacy from Hall road and surrounding homes.”
- “Loads of space, although more is always better for people's mental and physical health
- I feel it gives a real boundary to the property.”

Participants were asked how they would manage the balance between green space and access routes. The following suggestions were made:

- “It is mainly the entry points that are currently not accessible. I think if this is remedied with better entry paths this will help. I think this balance of green space allows for passive recreation, such as picnics, exercise etc.”
- “Thin but clear pathways. Can create beautiful, intriguing pathways that are unordinary, intriguing, and practical! Think outside the square!”
- “Provided there is access to the building and play area by paved paths (and a thoroughfare), I think green space should be maximised.”
- “I feel that the incorporation of vegetation to reflect something more like the royal botanic Gardens is far more appealing, a dense garden of trees that reflect old English or European homestead.”





## Concerns/Controversial Opinions

Participants voiced concerns and opinions for further consideration:

- “I am very concerned how close this will be to my property, I have such a tiny courtyard that I would like to be able to enjoy whilst having some privacy, not having people see into my courtyard and living area” Windward Estate resident.
- “The homestead has had its day, get rid of it to make way for the future.”
- “If more use, roads will need to be widened to compensate for parking on both sides.”
- “An upkeep report and plan, we cannot create this amazing space but let it go to waste.”

# Changes to the Landscape Plan

Participants have highlighted some key areas of adjustment for the landscape plan. A focus on addressing these topics would be ideal. Suggestions include:

- Site access with additional pathways and consideration of disability access see Diagram 5.
- Prioritisation of existing planting and foliage over the views off site.
- More opportunities for play integrated into the natural environment and access routes of the site.

**Diagram 5 - Additional Pathways Priority Map**



## Next Steps

City of Casey project team would like to acknowledge the work of Conversation Caravan during the consultation of this project.

The City of Casey will now use feedback from community engagement in August 2019 and online engagement in June 2020 to finalise the landscaping plans for the site.

Final landscaping plans will be posted on Casey Conversations and works will commence on the site early in 2021.

