



St Kilda Botanical Gardens Public Toilets Engagement Summary Report

April 2025





Acknowledgement of Country

Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their legacy and spiritual connection to the land and waterways across the City of Port Phillip and pay our heartfelt respect to their Elders, past, present and future.

Postal Address

City of Port Phillip, Private Bag 3,
PO St Kilda, VIC 3182

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Introduction

Project background

We are getting ready to build a new public toilet block at St Kilda Botanical Gardens, which will add extra capacity along with the existing toilet block. The new architecturally designed public toilet block will provide additional amenities that are better, brighter and more accessible for our community.

The current St Kilda Botanic Gardens public toilet block is outdated, with limited capacity (just 5 toilets) resulting in congestion and long wait times, especially in the busy warmer months. A 2021 accessibility compliance audit found the existing toilet block does not meet Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance.

A new accessible, inclusive public toilet block with improved capacity will better serve all park users. It will be built in addition to the existing toilet block, which will remain. The architecturally designed toilet block will be a single-storey building located closer to the playground, pending Heritage Victoria's approval. This upgrade will improve accessibility, safety, and capacity, especially during peak times, while reducing reliance on temporary hired toilets. The project will enhance the park's infrastructure, meet community needs, and support universal design and CPTED principles.

We propose to include the following in the new public toilet block a *minimum* of 5 toilets, including:

- One female toilet
- One male toilet

- Two unisex toilets that are Disability Discrimination Act compliant
- One all-gender ambulant toilet.

It may be possible to provide more toilets, subject to available budget and permit requirements.

We propose to equip these toilets with:

- Separate entry doors for each toilet
- A roof over the toilet building
- Baby-change facilities (within the DDA toilets) to enable carers of any gender to change their baby
- Hooks to hang personal items while using the toilet facilities
- Sanitary bins
- Clear and inclusive signage
- Incorporated Syringe Disposal System.

The following design guidelines will shape how the new toilets look and are built:

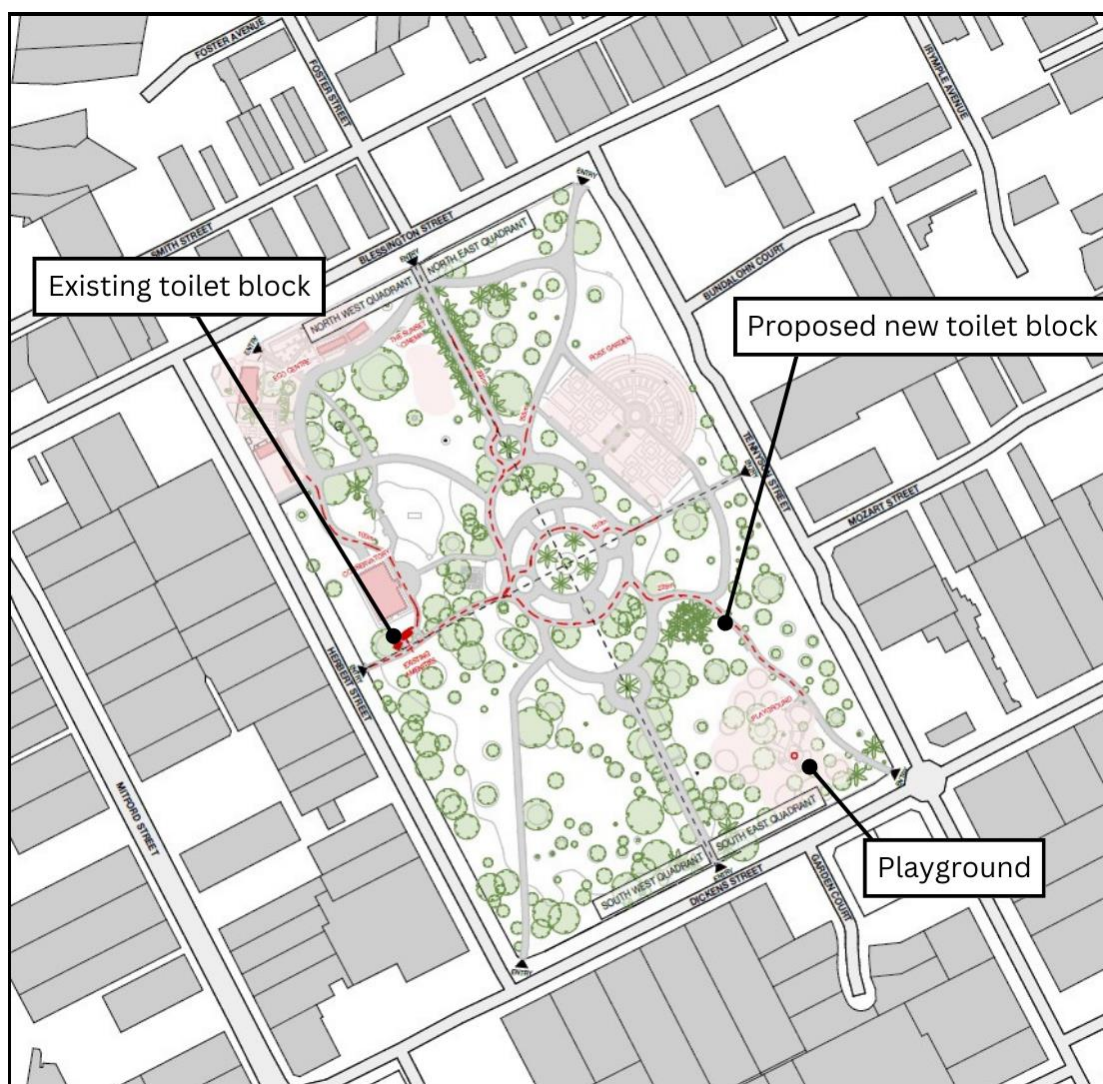
- New amenities block to complement existing facilities and close to the playground.
- Sculptural, organic design that blends with the landscape.
- Will not obstruct views, especially from the rose garden arbour.
- Clear identification as an amenities facility with DDA access.
- Safe, equitable design for all visitors.
- Natural colours, textured materials with anti-graffiti finishes.
- Durable, low-maintenance design inspired by existing amenities.

What we set out to achieve

During this engagement, we sought to communicate information about the proposed new public toilet block and seek the community's feedback via an online feedback form.

Acknowledgement and thanks

We would like to acknowledge and thank the community members who contributed feedback on this project.



Proposed location for the new public toilet block at St Kilda Botanical Gardens



About this report

This report outlines how Council has engaged to date on this project and summarises what we have heard from the community.

Before reading this report

The following should be considered in reading this report:

- The information in this report is based on qualitative research and does not necessarily reflect the views of a statistically representative sample of the community.
- City of Port Phillip strives to include diverse voices in our engagement activities. We acknowledge, however, that some people are likely to have experienced barriers to participation in the activities that are outlined in this report – including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, multicultural communities, older people, and others.
- The information and views presented in this report are a summary of the opinions, perceptions and feedback heard from across the engagement activities. The feedback has not been independently validated. As such, some information may be factually incorrect, unfeasible or outside of the scope of this project.
- This report summarises key feedback from participants and does not preclude the project team from considering community feedback in its original format.



What we did

Between 3 - 23 March 2025, a range of communications and engagement activities were carried out to inform the community about the proposed new public toilets, and to seek their feedback.

Communications and engagement activities

To increase awareness of the engagement process, we did the following:



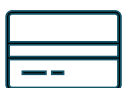
Have Your Say
website and
feedback form

A project page on Council's *Have Your Say* engagement website provided information on the process, a timeline, contact details, and a feedback form.



Corflute signage
displayed onsite
x 5

Corflute signage about the project and the opportunity to provide feedback was displayed onsite at St Kilda Botanical Gardens, installed on 10 March.



Letters to
local residents
x 1343

Letters notifying local residents about the project were delivered to 1343 residences near St Kilda Botanical Gardens on 3 March.

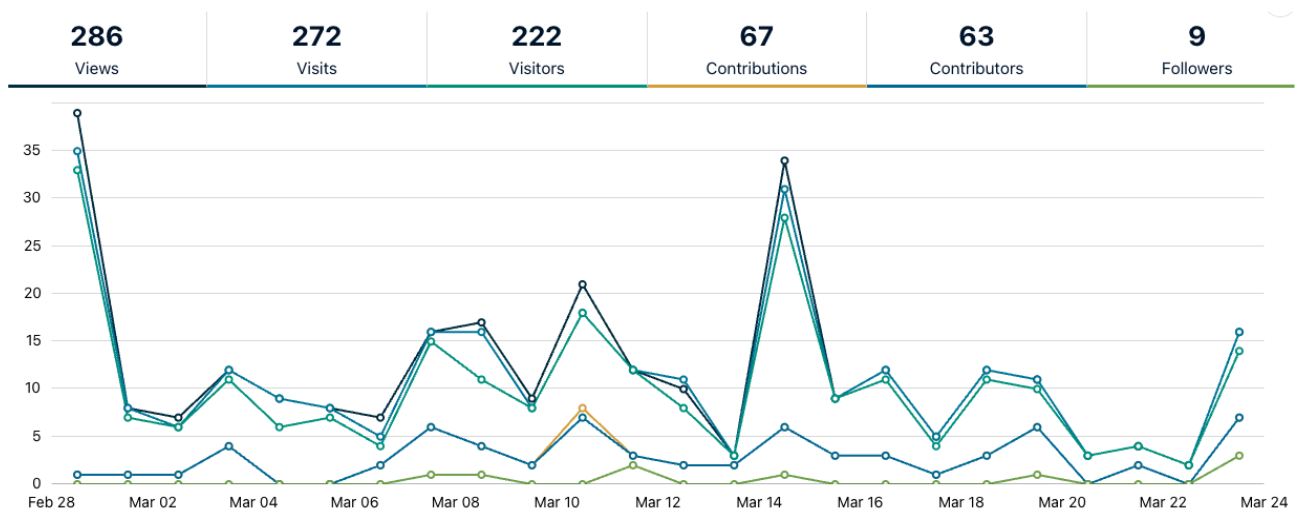


Newsletter
x 1

Information about the project and the opportunity to engage was included in the *Have Your Say* February 2025 newsletter, delivered to over 3,300 subscribers.

Project reach and participation

At least 3,300 people have heard about this project to date, with Figure 2 showing an overview of interactions with the *Have Your Say* project page to 23 March 2025, where 222 unique visitors visited the project page. We heard from 67 participants throughout this engagement process via the online feedback form.



Project page overview, "St Kilda Botanical Gardens Public Toilets", *Have Your Say*, 23 March 2025



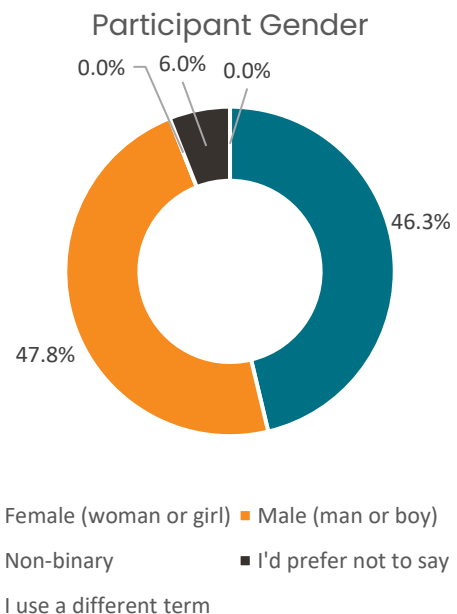
Who we heard from

Demographics

Participants were asked to provide some demographic information when filling out the online feedback form.

Gender

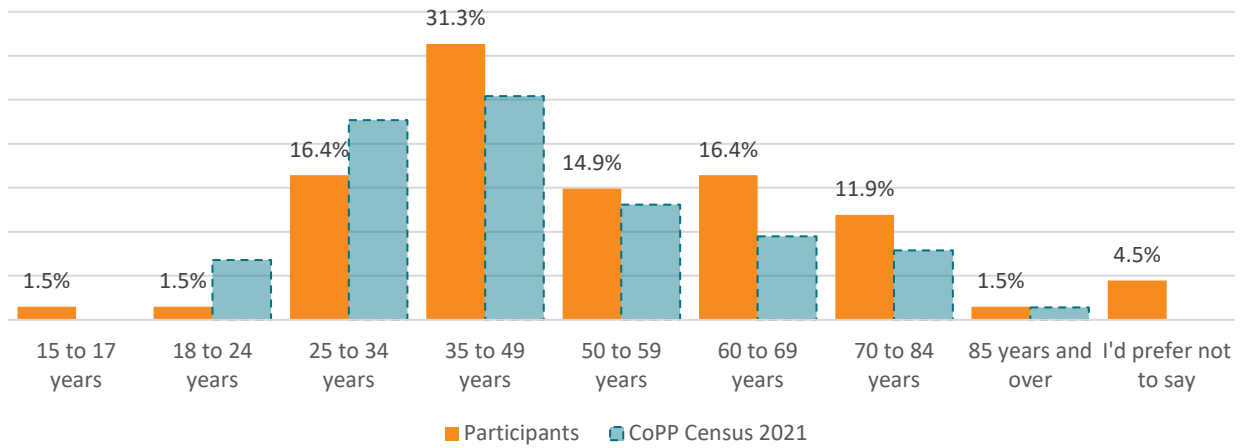
In total, 67 participants answered our question about gender. **The split between male (32, 47.8%) and female (31, 46.3%) participants was well balanced.** A small proportion of participants preferred not to provide their gender (4, 6%).



Age

67 participants answered this question. **The spread of age groups across the participants broadly reflects the spread of ages across the municipality, with a peak of ages 35 to 49 years old (21, 31.3%).** The under-representation of people aged 34 and under is also broadly reflective of community engagement projects.

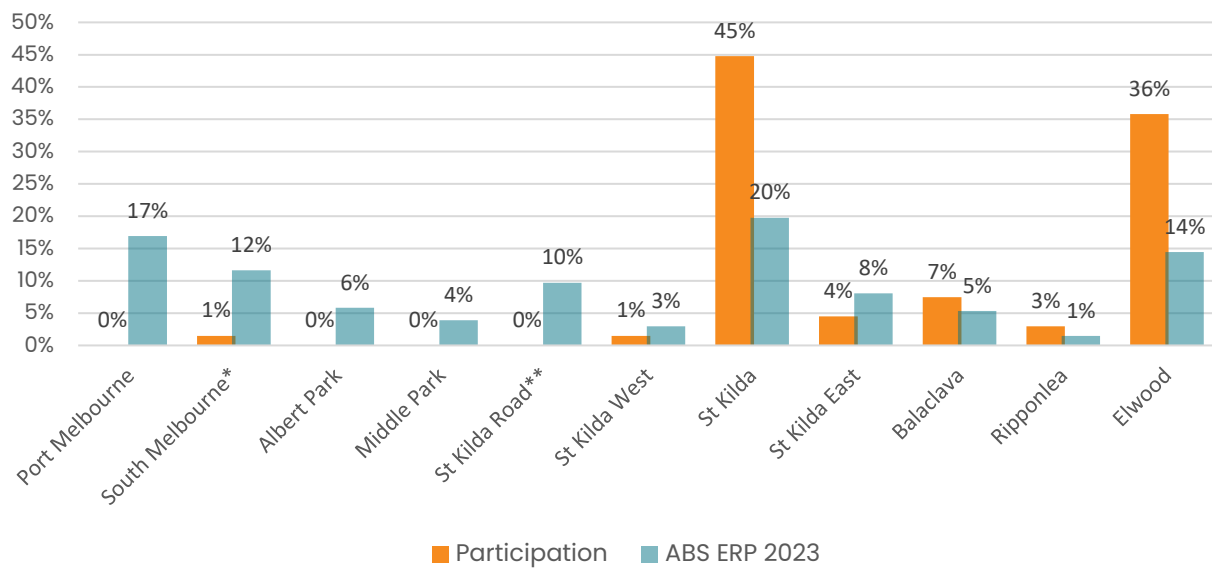
Age profiles: Participants vs Census data



Suburb

Of the 67 participants, nearly half (30, 45%) were from St Kilda, and more than a third were from Elwood (24, 36%). This concentration of participants is unsurprising given the location of the gardens.

Project Participation vs Census data by Suburb



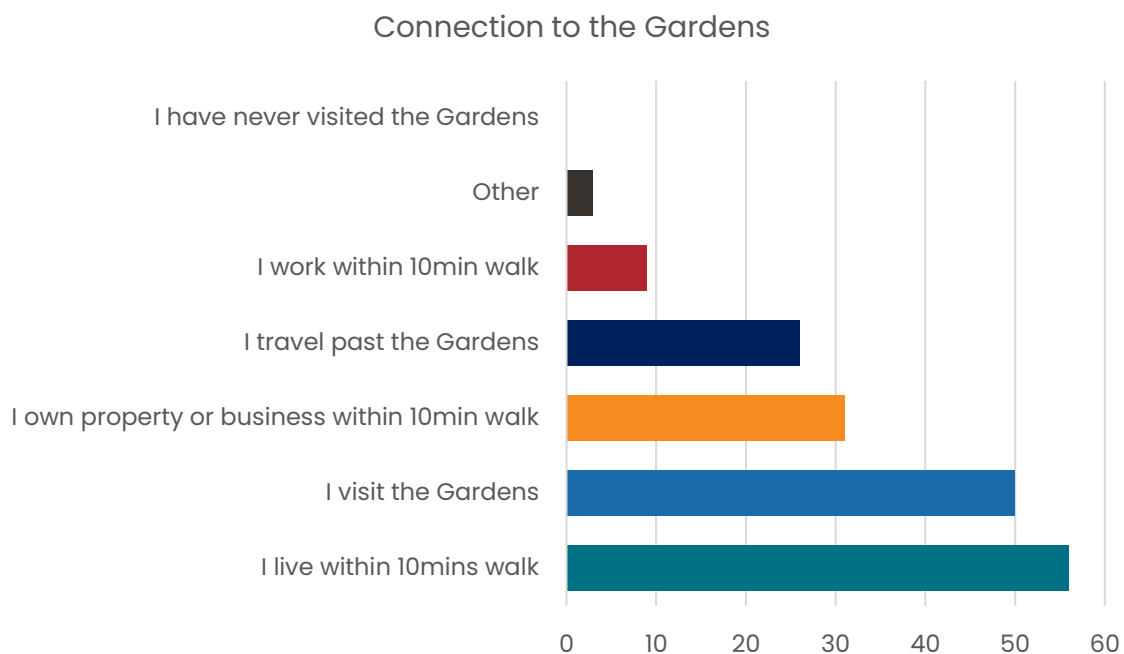
* South Melbourne includes the section of Southbank which is in the City of Port Phillip

** St Kilda Road includes sections of Melbourne and Windsor that are in the City of Port Phillip

Connection to the Gardens

Participants were asked to indicate the ways they were connected to the St Kilda Botanical Gardens. Each participant was able to select multiple answers. In total, 175 responses were received to this question, with most participants selected two or three of the available options.

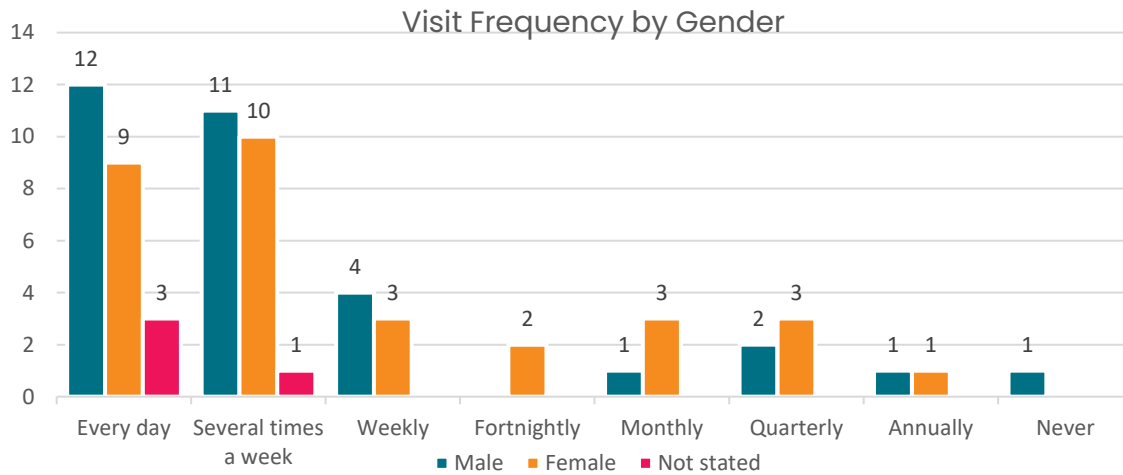
More than 83% of participants indicated that they live within 10 minutes' walk from the Gardens, and nearly three-quarters of participants told us they visit the gardens. Participants who selected 'other' (3%) were either volunteers or had recently moved away from the Gardens.



Visiting the Gardens

Participants were asked how often they visit the St Kilda Botanical Gardens. **More than two thirds of participants were very regular visitors to the Gardens, with 35.8%**

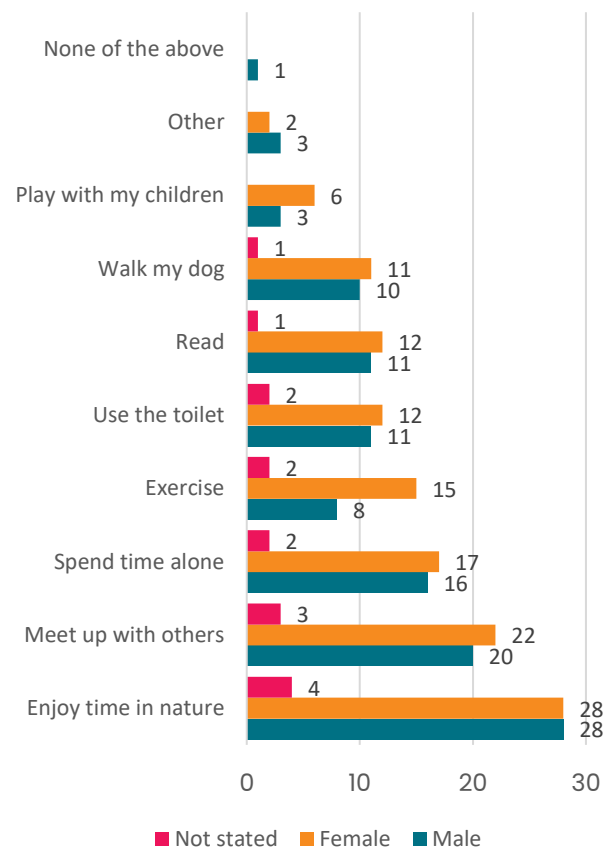
of participants saying they visit every day, and 32.8% saying they visit multiple times a week. Male participants were slightly more likely to visit more frequently.



How participants use the Gardens

We asked participants how they use the Gardens. Participants were able to select multiple answers from a list of uses. Female participants on average selected more uses (four uses) than male participants (three uses). The most common use was enjoying time in nature (89.6% of participants), followed by meeting up with others (67.2%). 37.5% of participants said they use the toilets in the Gardens.

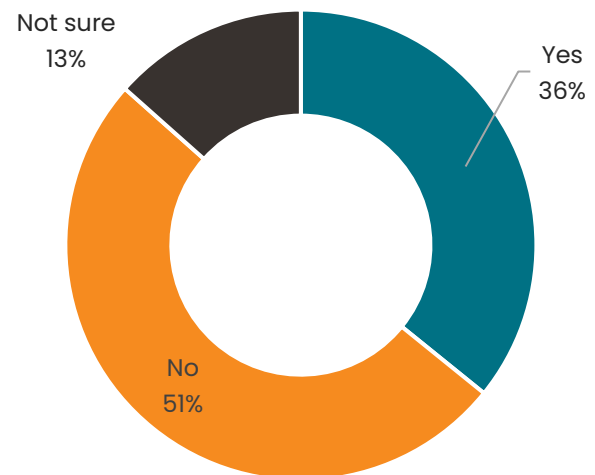
Use of the Gardens by Gender



Previous engagement with Council

We asked participants if they had provided feedback on other Council projects in the past 12 months. **Of the 67 responses received, 34 participants (51%) said 'no',** and 24 participants (36%) said 'yes' they had. Nine participants (13%) were unsure.

Previous Engagement with CoPP



Diversity indicators

We asked participants to indicate if they identified with a series of statements to understand the diversity of the participant group. Participants were able to select multiple statements. The following statements are ordered from most to least common.

- “None of these apply to me” (40 responses, 59.7%)
- “I identify as LGBTIQ+” (9 responses, 13.4%)
- “I speak a language other than English at home” (6 responses, 9%)
- “I am a person with a disability” (5 responses, 7.5%)
- “I am from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background” (1 response, 1.5%)

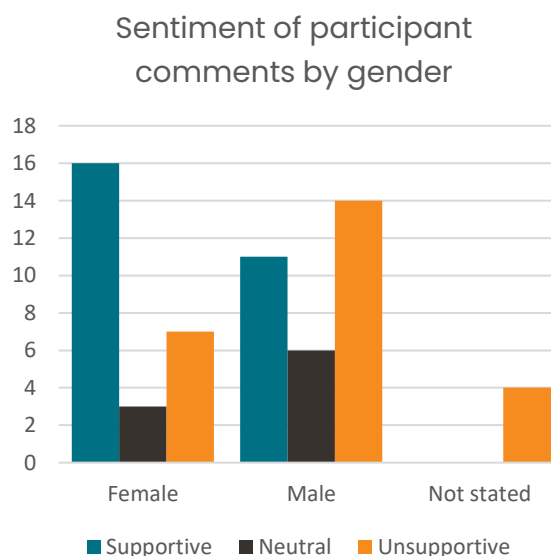
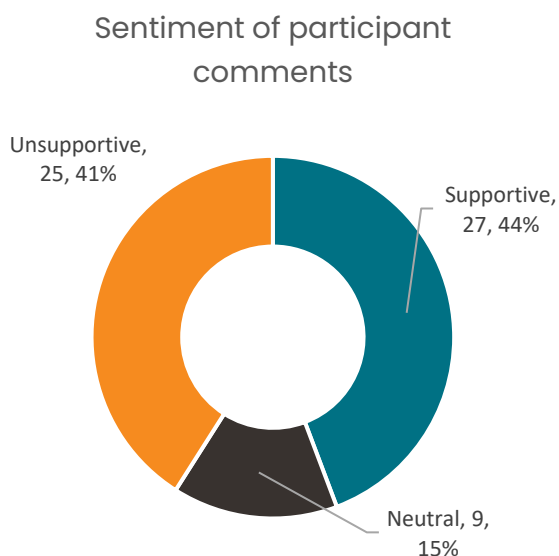
What we heard

Comments on the proposal

Of the 67 participants who completed the survey, 61 participants provided comments. A thematic analysis is provided below. Where appropriate, other demographic characteristics, such as gender, are used in the analysis.

Sentiment of participant comments

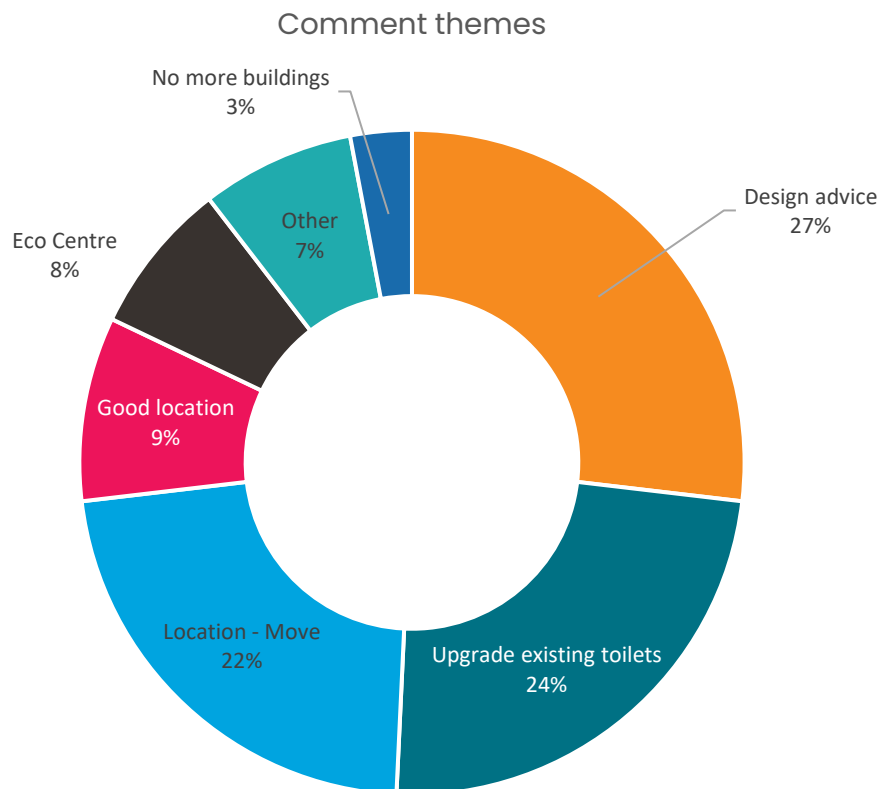
Of the 61 participant comments, **sentiment was largely balanced**. In total, 44% (27) comments were supportive of the proposed toilet block. Comments in opposition made up 41% (25) of the comments, leaving 15% (9) that were neutral. **Assessed across genders, male participants were more likely to be unsupportive than female participants.**





Thematic analysis

Across the 61 comments, seven key themes emerged. These are outlined in the chart below. Each theme is explored and explained in the next section.



Design advice (27%)

All comments relating to the design elements of the proposed toilets were either supportive (14 comments) or neutral (4 comments). The majority of these comments focused on the features of the new toilets, including:

- Good lighting to promote safety
- Looking to other new local designs for inspiration (such as Alma Park/ Point Ormond)

- Soap, hand drying, showers and good ventilation
- Solar power
- Accessibility considerations for older people, people with disability, parents with prams, a cubicle with a grownup and a toddler-size toilet, and a changing room separate to the accessible toilet.

Comments included:

'The existing public toilets are a lasting and quality piece of architecture. The provided an opportunity at the time to an emerging local architectural practice (Wood Marsh) to design something unique and site responsive. It would be a fantastic legacy for the botanic gardens if the new toilet block also sought to prioritize good design principles, and provide an opportunity for site generosity. Maybe a small-scale design competition would be a good approach?'
(Female, St Kilda resident)

'Your plan looks great. I think more all-gender toilets are great, and near the playground is sensible. Apart from the disabled toilets, you could put the sinks outside. A mirror or other reflective surface in the women's toilet would be handy.'
(Female, St Kilda resident)

'Public toilets are rare in St Kilda and modern ones with facilities for families are essential as are handicapped toilets.' (Male, Ripponlea resident)

'Building more toilets is a great idea. Also, in the long run this will reduce the annual spend on the hiring of temporary toilets. (Which is of concern to me as a rate payer). Temporary portable toilets are also unpleasant to use. The new toilets should be well ventilated to make them more pleasant and well lit (both natural and artificial light) to avoid crime. Soap and toilet paper should remain well stocked. It would be good if a picture of the proposed toilet block had been shown for this survey. They should blend into surroundings. I avoid using the current toilets due to them being quite unpleasant which sometimes means I have to go home (since I live 20 minute walk away) sooner than I would like. More pleasant toilets would allow me to spend more time enjoying the gardens.'
(Female, Elwood resident).

Upgrade the existing toilets (24%)

All comments relating to upgrading the existing toilet blocks were unsupportive of the proposed new toilets. Of these 16 comments, 9 comments were from male participants, 5 comments were from female participants, and 2 comments were from participants who chose not to disclose their gender. Most comments related to the impact of further buildings on the gardens and amenity of the landscape, or the cost of building a new facility.

Comments included:

'I think the idea of putting an unsightly and a potentially smelly, poorly maintained toilet block in a prime area of the St Kilda Botanic Gardens to be a very poor idea. This proposal should be abandoned. If there is a need for additional toilets (and I am not sure if that is a valid assumption), then the obvious thing to do would be to increase the size of the existing toilet facilities. This is obvious as there are existing services to connect to, e.g. sewer, power and water. Also this results in less of an eye-sore than a new standalone facility.'
(St Kilda resident)

'The Gardens certainly need adequate toilets that meet modern standards, but I question the proposed site... It would be better to upgrade the existing facilities, put up directional signage and most of all provide better security to deter offensive and sometimes damaging behaviour.' (Male, Elwood resident)

'The proposed toilets should NOT be near the children's playground. This is a VERY BAD idea. The alternative would be to add more toilets to the existing block'
(Female, St Kilda resident)

Location of the proposed toilets (31%)

Comments suggesting the location for the proposed toilets should be changed made up 22% of comments. A further 9% of comments shared that the location was good.

COMMENTS OPPOSED TO THE LOCATION (22%)

Of the 15 comments suggesting the location was not appropriate, 10 comments were unsupportive, and 5 comments were neutral. Most comments were from male participants.

Comments included:

'The proposed new toilet location is inappropriate and will involve providing new sewer points and encroachment of open space which is slowly being eaten away through building constructions in the gardens (see the large foot front excised for the Eco Centre building. Clearly the existing toilet facilities are inadequate but the services to the current toilets are already established so it would be better to refurbish these to meet current standards and the volume of cubicles deemed necessary. Also given the huge council investment in the eco centre the public should also have access to the toilets provided in this public building.'

(Male, St Kilda resident)

'...The current suggested location of the new facility is in lawn space that is great for people to hang out on. By putting a new toilet block on that location you reduce that kind of space for local residents who often live in apartment blocks or houses with little green space of their own. The gardens are heavily used. On a nice day on the weekend for example almost every area in the park has groups of people in it. No one will choose to picnic next to the toilet block!'

(Female, St Kilda resident)

'I think the proposed location is really not in a good spot. As most people enter via Blessington or Dickens, and settle on the opposite side, why have it facing Tennyson across? I understand the space, but that's the only good patch of green that's not overtaken often by groups like the Shakespeare, Wedding Photography, Acapella Groups or Yoga. On that half of the park, it is truly the best spot to have a quiet space to catch up with friends or sunbathe/read on your own. Also, with the lake, conservatory, and the upcoming new building, why would you



not have the bathrooms close to the other attractions of the garden? It truly would be a wasted opportunity not having it near the buildings and wasting such vital greenery and space that we love so much about the gardens.'
(Male, St Kilda resident)

COMMENTS SUPPORTIVE OF THE LOCATION (9%)

Six comments were supportive of the proposed location. Female participants provided four of these comments, and male participants provided two comments.

Comments included:

'This is a great idea and well overdue. The only current toilets are too far away from the playground...' (Male, Elwood resident)

'I welcome the addition of another public toilet block in the gardens, The position is great and close to the children's play area. Children frequently need to use the toilets and it's quite a walk to the existing block. Also the Tennyson St area is a popular area for family gatherings and children's parties so it will be a welcome addition to the beautiful garden.' (Female, St Kilda resident)

Use of the Eco Centre toilets (8%)

Five comments related to the Eco Centre toilets, with four comments from male participants and one from a participant who chose not to disclose their gender.

The majority of these comments (four comments) were unsupportive of the proposed toilets – questioning the need for additional toilets, suggesting that the Eco Centre should have additional toilets made available to the public, or noting they felt that the centre as well as the proposed toilets were encroaching on the greenspace of the gardens.

Comments included:

'I totally disagree with another toilet block in the park - if council suggest we need 5 new toilets then why weren't these included in the eco centre building.'
(Male, St Kilda resident)

'[I] don't see the need. There are already public toilets, they could do with a refurbishment. The eco centre is still being built, what is the situation there? Surely there are also going to be toilets there.' (Male, Elwood resident)

No more buildings (3%)

The idea of reducing the number of buildings in the Gardens was common in a number of other comments, but two comments specifically raised this issue.

Both **comments were unsupportive of the proposed toilets.**

Comments included:

'I am concerned that an open area of the park will be modified with the addition of a new toilet block. The Gardens are significant because of its heritage values, significant trees and history. The new toilet block is an unnecessary addition to the gardens which already has a toilet block not that far from where this block is to be located. I feel that the commercial aspects of the garden (weddings, events, etc.) are driving the need for additional toilets and that this use should not override the heritage of the gardens. If the current toilet block is not sufficient for the gardens, then modify the existing block and use portables during construction.' (Female, Elwood resident)

Other feedback (7%)

Five comments included questions or advice outside of the scope of this

project, including: advice on the playground equipment, drinking fountains, tree planting and the engagement process. Where appropriate, this advice or feedback will be passed onto the relevant Council teams.



Next steps

Thank you to everyone who provided their feedback on the proposed new public toilets at St Kilda Botanical Gardens. The engagement findings from this engagement will now be used to further inform Council decision-making on this project.

Community feedback on the proposed public toilets for St Kilda Botanical Gardens will be presented to a Council Meeting, at:

St Kilda Town Hall, Carlisle Street, 21 May 2025, 6.30pm.

Construction of the new public toilets is expected to begin in 2026–2027 (dates to be confirmed).

We will continue to keep the community updated on the progress of the project via the dedicated project page at www.haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/st-kilda-botanical-gardens-public-toilets.