

Children, Youth and Family Spaces

Community Engagement Summary Report

Executive summary

Project background

In June to July 2025, Monash Council engaged the community to help shape Children, Youth and Family Services Infrastructure Planning. Infrastructure Planning will help Council plan for the future and make informed decisions about the facilities needed to support children, young people and families across the municipality. The engagement explored current experiences, barriers, service and location preferences, and aspirations for future spaces.

We asked

Council used two Shape Monash surveys. The parent and community survey sought feedback on early years, family and youth facilities, including kindergartens, playgroups, Maternal and Child Health services, community hubs and youth spaces. The children and young person survey asked people aged 8 to 25 about the places they use, what helps them feel safe and welcome, where they seek support, and what they want in future spaces.

You said

- Families valued welcoming staff, quality educators and inclusive, child-friendly environments. Most respondents described services positively.
- Local access matters. Proximity to home or work, quality indoor and outdoor environments, affordability, transport, parking and practical amenities shape whether facilities are easy to use.
- Outdoor play areas, community hubs and youth spaces were priorities. Respondents also wanted flexible spaces that support informal use, social connection and changing needs.
- Young people wanted safe, free or low-cost places to spend time with friends, study, participate in recreation and creativity, and access wellbeing support.
- There is support for co-located services, but design must manage crowding, safety and the different needs of young children, families and young people.

We listened

Your feedback is helping inform Council's infrastructure planning for children, young people and families. What we heard from families, children and young people has helped Council understand what matters most when planning future spaces - including being close to home, work or everyday destinations, easy to access, welcoming and inclusive, safe, flexible, and connected to outdoor areas and other services. These insights will help Council make more informed decisions about future facilities, alongside other factors such as population change, service needs, building condition, utilisation, policy requirements and funding considerations.

Next steps

Council will use the survey findings to support future infrastructure planning for children, young people and families. Further work will be required before any specific projects, priorities or funding decisions are confirmed.

Background

Council manages and supports a broad network of spaces used by children, young people and families. These include kindergartens, playgroups, Maternal and Child Health facilities, youth spaces, community centres and child and family hubs. Families also rely on libraries, parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities as part of their everyday service network.

The engagement was undertaken to better understand how people currently use and experience these spaces, what limits access or participation, and what the community values in future facilities. The feedback will help inform Council's ongoing infrastructure planning and support a coordinated approach to future decision-making across Monash.

What we invited feedback on

- Current use and experience of children, youth and family services and facilities.
- Whether facilities feel welcoming, inclusive, safe and accessible.
- Barriers such as capacity, location, transport, cost, hours and parking.
- Preferred facility features, amenities and locations.
- Preferences for stand-alone facilities or co-located service hubs.
- The types of spaces Monash needs more of and the improvements people most want to see.

How we engaged (We asked)

Two online surveys were delivered through the Shape Monash engagement platform:

Survey	Audience	Responses reported
Parent and community survey	Parents, carers and community members	240 respondents
Children and young person survey	Children and young people aged 8-25	46 respondents

The surveys were open from Friday 13 June to Wednesday 30 July 2025. They were widely promoted through Council's Child and Family Hubs, CYFS service network newsletters, emails and phone messaging services, the Monash Bulletin, Council's social media channels, an engagement session with Council's Junior Advisory Group and flyers at various Council facilities and CYFS services.

Feedback (You said)

Who we heard from

Parent and community survey

The survey was predominantly completed by parents and carers. Of the responses recorded as to the role of the respondent, 229 were parents or carers, 5 were grandparents, 8 were community members, 1 was an advisory group member and 1 was a service provider.

Responses were received from most Monash suburbs. The largest recorded suburb response groups were Mount Waverley, Glen Waverley, Wheelers Hill, Mulgrave and Clayton. The age information supplied by respondents showed a strong early years focus, while also capturing the experiences of families with primary school-aged children and teenagers.

Children and young person survey

46 respondents were aged 8 to 25. Participation was strongest among the 8 to 13 and 14 to 18 age groups, with fewer responses from people aged 19 to 25. Responses were received from almost all suburbs, with

higher participation from Oakleigh South, Clayton and Glen Waverley. The findings therefore provide a useful but small sample of younger people's views and should be considered alongside other project evidence.

What we heard from the community

Key findings

Area	What the survey results showed
Welcoming services	In the parent survey, 57% rated services as very welcoming (5 out of 5) and 32% rated them 4 out of 5.
Access difficulties	15% of parent survey respondents reported difficulties getting to or using services and 84% reported they did not have any difficulties. High demand and limited places was the most selected difficulty.
Choosing services	Close to home or work received 205 selections, followed by high-quality facilities and outdoor spaces with 180 and affordable fees with 114.
More spaces needed	Outdoor play spaces received 166 selections (25%), community centres or hubs 117 (18%), and youth spaces 96 (14%).
Co-location	42% preferred services located together in centres or hubs, 22% preferred stand-alone buildings, 30% had no preference, and 5% were unsure.
Young people: safety and welcome	65% of young respondents felt there were enough safe and welcoming places for young people in Monash whilst 35% did not.
Young people: desired services	Safe places to hang out received 34 selections and events for young people 33, followed by sports and recreation programs with 25.
Young people: ideal spaces	Play areas were ranked first by 45% of respondents. Nature spaces achieved the highest overall weighted score.
Young people: support	Friends and parents or caregivers were the most frequently selected sources of help, with 39 selections each.

Key themes

Theme	What we heard	Illustrative community voice
1. Local, accessible and affordable	People want facilities close to home, schools, transport and everyday destinations. Cost, distance, transport, parking and limited hours can reduce access.	"Everywhere costs money and it's far to walk to places"
2. Outdoor play, recreation and nature	Families and young people value parks, playgrounds, nature, sport, bike and skate opportunities. They want modern equipment, shade, shelter, toilets and safe access.	"With backyards being smaller good outdoor spaces are pivotal for children to play outside."
3. Dedicated and welcoming youth spaces	Both surveys identified a gap in spaces designed for older children and young people. Young people want safe places to hang out, study, create and connect without needing to join a formal program.	"More accessible spaces for all youth not just young people in crisis."
4. Flexible, multi-use community spaces	Respondents support spaces that can accommodate different services and informal uses. Co-location can improve convenience, but facilities need age-appropriate areas and careful management of safety, noise and crowding.	"It's good if multiple services can be accessed in one location."
5. Quality, inclusion and belonging	People value welcoming, inclusive and child-friendly spaces that support participation, social connection and belonging.	"Feeling a part of a community / belonging is so important to maintaining good mental health."

6. Capacity and service availability	Families told us that waiting lists, limited places, session times and booking processes can affect how easily they access services. Convenient, well-located and connected services can make it easier for families to participate.	"Life is busy with family so visiting one place that offers all services is not only convenient but more efficient."
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How we will consider your feedback (We listened)

The surveys provided a clear community perspective on the qualities and functions future infrastructure should support. This feedback will help inform Council's infrastructure planning in the following ways:

What we heard	How this will inform infrastructure planning
Facilities should be local and easy to reach.	Future planning should consider where facilities are located, how easy they are to reach, and how they connect with public transport, walking and cycling routes, parking and other community destinations.
Outdoor, informal and everyday spaces are highly valued.	Future planning should recognise parks, playgrounds, outdoor learning, recreation and informal community spaces as important parts of the broader children, youth and family infrastructure network.
Youth spaces are underprovided.	Future planning should give attention to creating age-appropriate opportunities for young people to connect, learn, recreate, express creativity and support their wellbeing.
Families value quality, inclusion and practical amenities.	Future planning should consider accessibility, child-friendly design, sensory needs, toilets, change facilities, shade, safety, drop-off and pickup, and welcoming indoor and outdoor environments.
Flexible and co-located facilities can improve access.	Future planning should consider adaptable and multi-use approaches where appropriate, while recognising the need to protect age-specific needs and manage safety, noise, crowding and service compatibility.
Capacity and availability affect participation.	Future infrastructure decisions should consider community experiences of capacity and availability alongside more detailed evidence, including demand, utilisation, building condition, service requirements and funding considerations.
Informal relationships are important sources of support.	Future planning should recognise the role of spaces in strengthening connection, belonging and peer interaction, and supporting access to services in familiar, non-clinical settings where appropriate.

What this engagement cannot determine on its own

The survey findings will help inform infrastructure planning, but they do not, by themselves, determine where a new facility will be built, which existing facility will be upgraded, the timing of works, or whether funding will be allocated. Future infrastructure decisions will require more detailed evidence and assessment, including population and service demand, asset condition and performance, utilisation, land and planning constraints, partnership opportunities, policy obligations, affordability and Council budget processes.

Next steps

- Your feedback is shaping our planning; we look forward to sharing the next stage of this work and inviting further community input.
- We will consider community priorities alongside further evidence, including demand, utilisation, asset condition, land, policy, funding and delivery considerations.
- Community engagement, assessment and reporting will be undertaken before future priorities, projects or funding decisions are confirmed.
- We will report back to the community on what was heard and how feedback has been considered in future infrastructure planning.