

# LAKE MACQUARIE CITY COUNCIL PARKS AND PLAY STRATEGY 2021 ENGAGEMENT REPORT



APRIL 2021

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*Otium Planning Group acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and to Elders, past, present and emerging. Otium is committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.*

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# 1. Introduction

The purpose of the Parks and Play Strategy is to:

*“Create a Strategy that will plan for and enhance the park and play experience of Lake Macquarie residents and visitors.”*

A Community Engagement Plan was prepared to guide engagement activities in the preparation of the Lake Macquarie Parks and Play Strategy. Engagement activities aimed to seek input from Council staff, park and playground users, key stakeholder groups, neighbouring Councils, key government agencies and the broader Lake Macquarie community, and included:

- A Shape Lake Mac project page providing project information and detail on how to provide input
- Awareness raising and social media
- An online ideas board via Shape Lake Mac and Instacomment via Shape Lake Mac and Instagram
- Community Survey
- Targeted discussion groups
- Key stakeholder interview
- Over 220 direct emails to community and key stakeholders including schools, daycare centres, playgroups, progress associations, sustainable neighbourhood groups, men’s sheds, disability organisations, ageing/older adult organisations and youth organisations.

This report summarises the outcomes of the engagement undertaken to date. It is part of a suite of documents, which together comprise the overall Parks, Play and Public Amenities Strategy.

The documents that make up the overall Parks, Play and Public Amenities Strategy Project are shown below:

Parks and Play Strategy	Public Amenities Strategy
Combined Background Report (this document)	
Combined Community Engagement Report	
Analysis Report	Analysis Report and Demand and Priority Assessment Tools
Planning Framework and Assessment Tools	Strategic Summary
Parks and Playspaces Inventories	Public Amenities Inventory



## 2. Community Survey

An online community survey was conducted between 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to seek information from the Lake Macquarie community on:

- Usage of parks and playgrounds
- Perceived importance and performance of park and playground features
- Perceived barriers to using/ accessing parks, playgrounds and public amenities
- Future aspirations and priorities for parks, playgrounds and public amenities
- Community appetite for involvement in parks and playground planning, design and management.

A total of 217 responses were received.

### 2.1 Respondent Profile

Survey respondents were predominantly female, with over half of the respondents aged between 25 and 44 years.

**Table 1: Respondent Profile**

Category	Sub-Group	Number	%
Gender (n=173) (44 respondents skipped this question)	Female	123	71.10
	Male	48	27.75
	Other	2	1.16
Age Range (n=173) (44 respondents skipped this question)	Under 18 years	1	0.58
	18-24 years	5	2.89
	25-34 years	38	21.97
	35-44 years	59	34.10
	45-54 years	26	15.03
	55-64 years	24	13.87
	65+ years	15	8.67
	Not stated	5	2.89

There was at least one respondent from 53 of the 99 suburbs located within the Lake Macquarie LGA, with the highest number of respondents being recorded in Dudley (8.09%), Charlestown (7.51%), Warners Bay (6.94%) and Toronto (5.20%). The top 14 suburbs of residence for survey respondents are shown below.

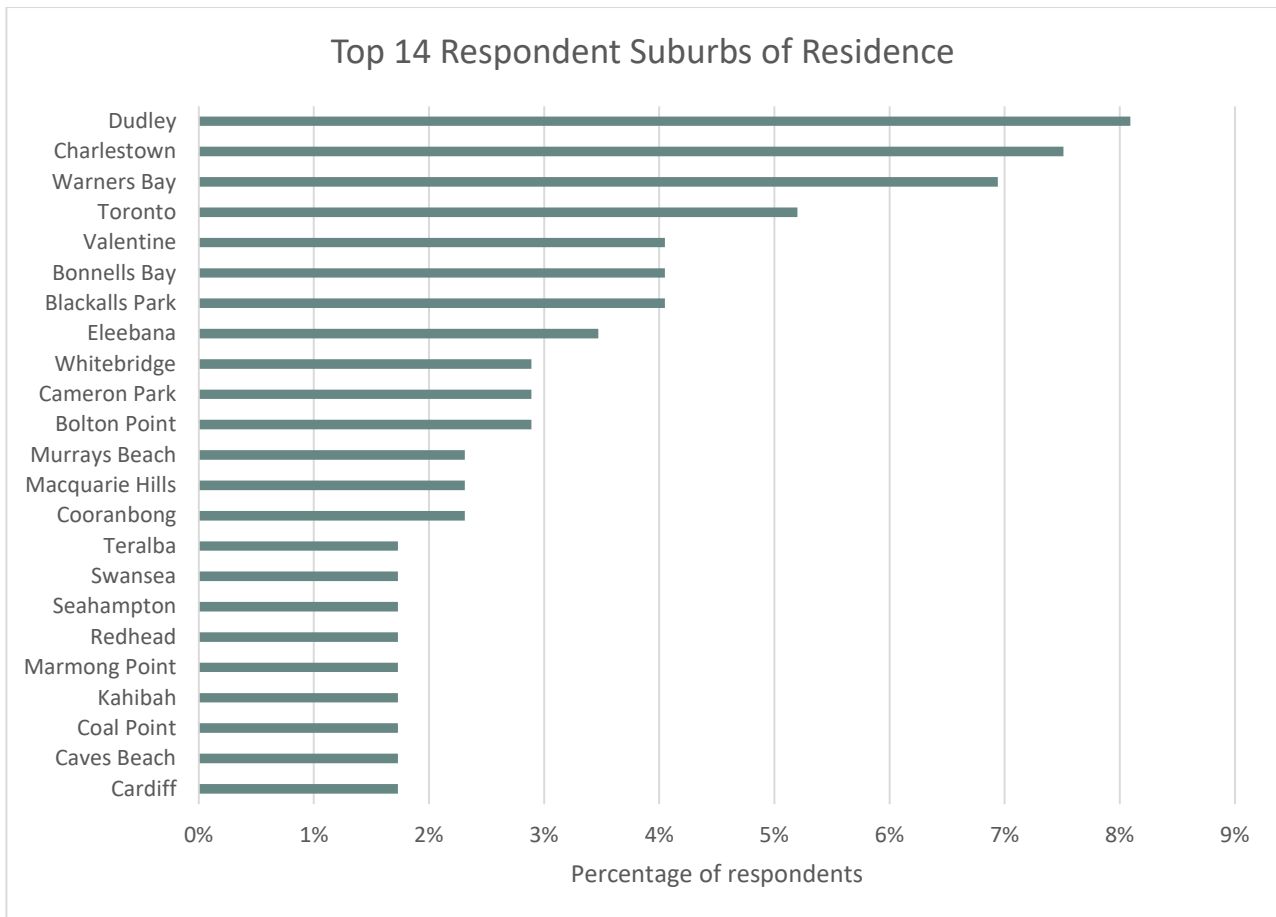


Figure 1: Respondent Suburb of Residence

## 2.2 Park Usage

Overall, 98.10% of respondents indicated they had visited a Council park in the last 12 months.

Respondents were asked to select their favourite park from a list of 141 Council parks. In total 45 parks were identified by respondents, with the most popular park being Speers Point Park, accounting for 29.8% of all responses. Other parks to receive more than 10 responses were:

- Warners Bay Foreshore (7.58%)
- Thomas H Halton Park (5.05%)
- Webb Park (5.05%)

An important part of the survey was to understand how parks were being used, and whether respondents were using the park closest to their house, or whether they were travelling further for a particular reason. Respondents were asked if their favourite park was the closest park to their house, and if not, why they travel further to use this park.

The majority of respondents (61.11%) indicated that their favourite park is not the closest park to their house.

These respondents were asked why they travelled further to visit that particular park instead of using the one closest to them. The figure below details the reasons respondents gave for travelling further.

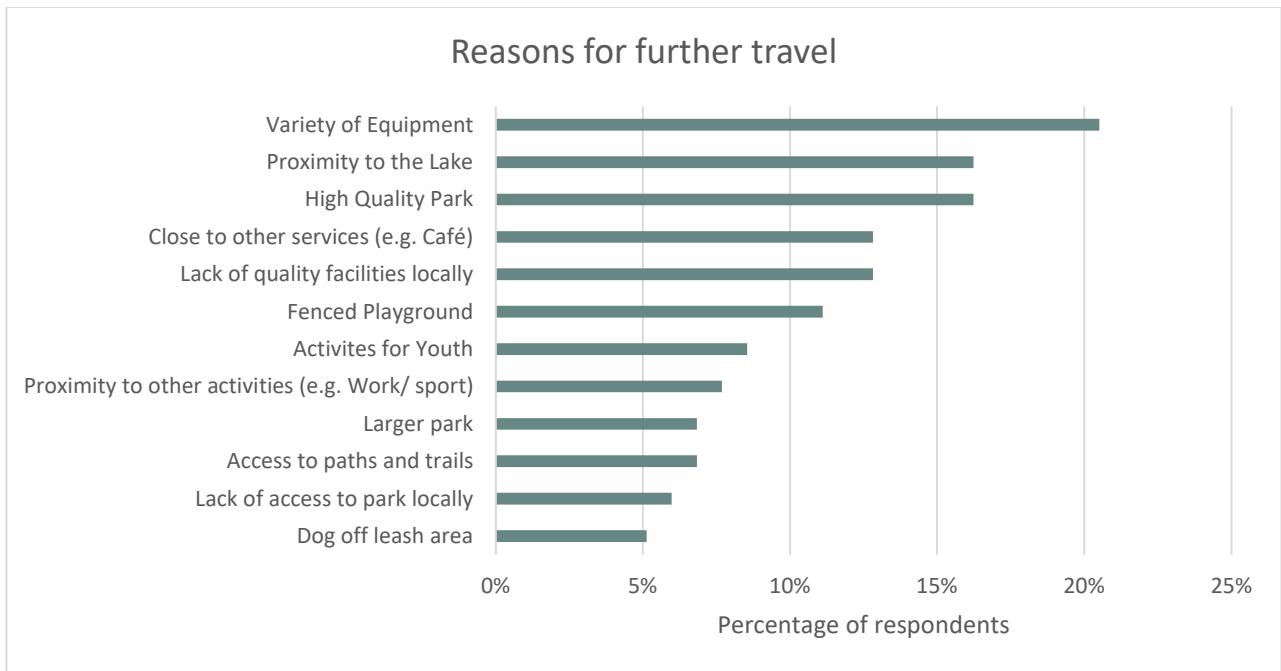


Figure 2: Reasons for travelling further to access favourite park

The table below details the key reasons respondents travelled further to visit the top four parks.

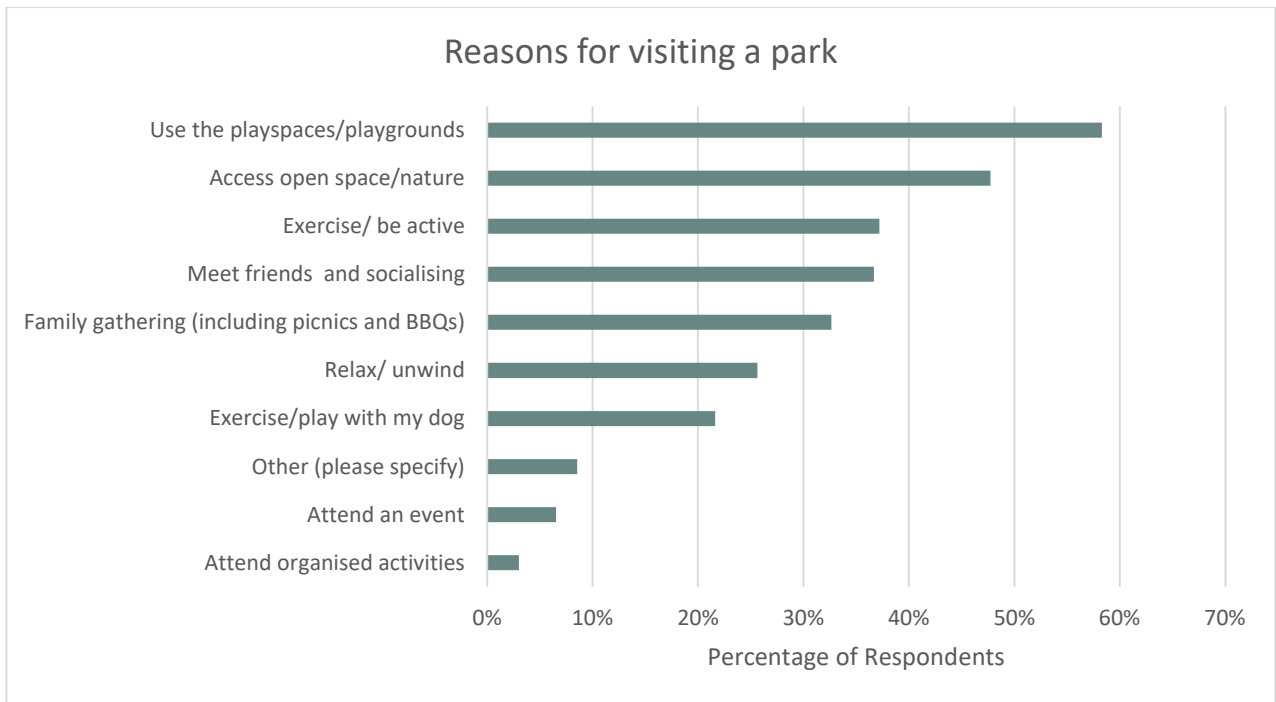
Table 2: Reasons to travel further to a specific park

Park	Responses	Themes
Speers Point Park	1. n=16 2. n=7 3. n=7 4. n=6	1. Has a variety of equipment. 2. Fenced for children safety. 3. Has large space for activities. 4. Close to other services.
Warners Bay Foreshore	1. n=4 2. n=2 3. n=2 4. n=2	1. Fenced for children safety. 2. More for youth. 3. Has a variety of equipment. 4. Close to other services
Webb Park	1. n=2 2. n=2	1. The local park has limited play features. 2. More for youth
Thomas H Halton Park	1. n=2 2. n=2 3. n=2	1. Has a Dog Off Leash Area 2. Provides access to trails and cycleways 3. Good proximity to the Lake
Reay Park	1. n=2	1. This park has better facilities

Respondents were asked why they visit the park, and were provided a list of options to select from. The most common reason for visiting a park was to “Use the playspaces/playgrounds” which accounted for more than 50% of all responses. Other popular reasons included to “Access open space/ nature”, “exercise/ be active” and “Meet friends and socialising”. The figure below illustrates the responses. There were 17 ‘other’ responses, which commonly included:

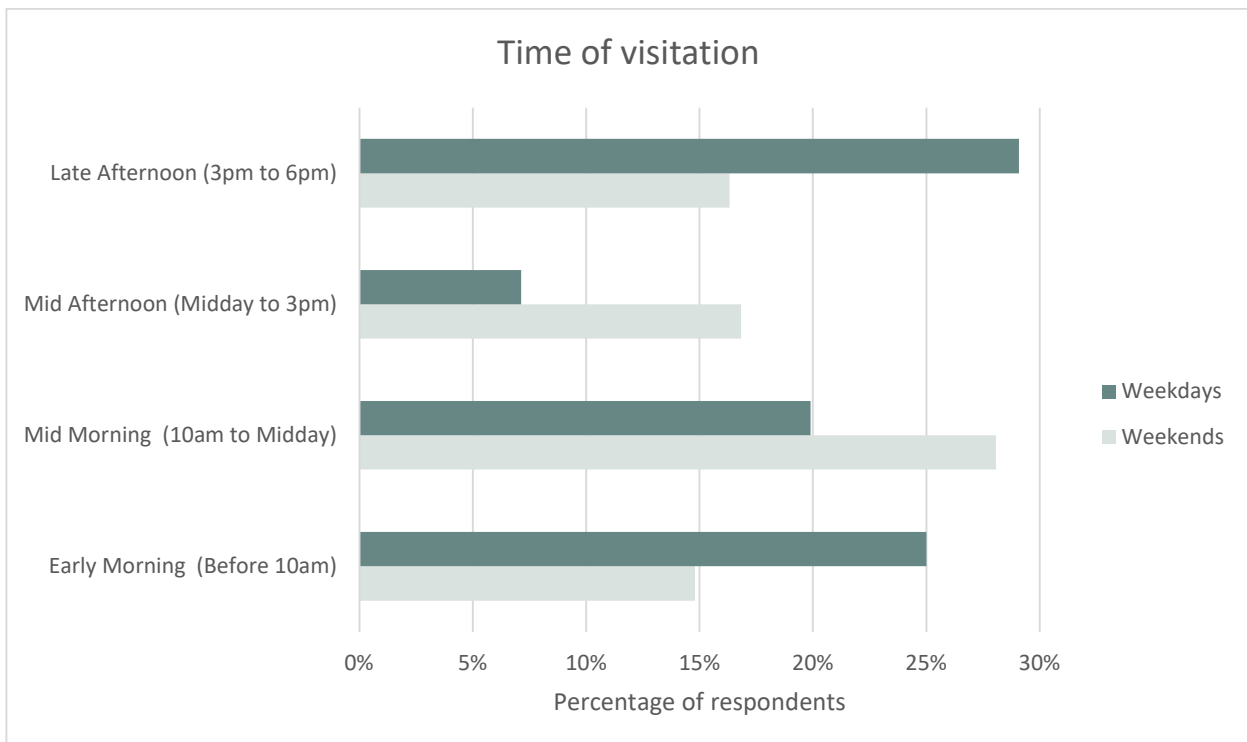
- Taking children to the park/ playground
- To access the lake and lake/waterbased activities such as swimming, fishing, and boating.
- To engage in activities (e.g. model cars, kayaking etc.)





**Figure 3: Reasons for visiting a park**

Respondents were just as likely to visit a park during the week (51.62%) as they were on weekends (48.38%). The most common time to visit a park was late afternoon on a weekday (29.08%) and mid-morning on a weekend (28.06%). The figure below illustrates park visitation across weekdays and weekends.



**Figure 4: Usual time of visitation to parks**

More than 90% of all respondents spent at least 30 minutes when they visited a park, with more than 50% spending at least 1 hour, as shown in the figure below.

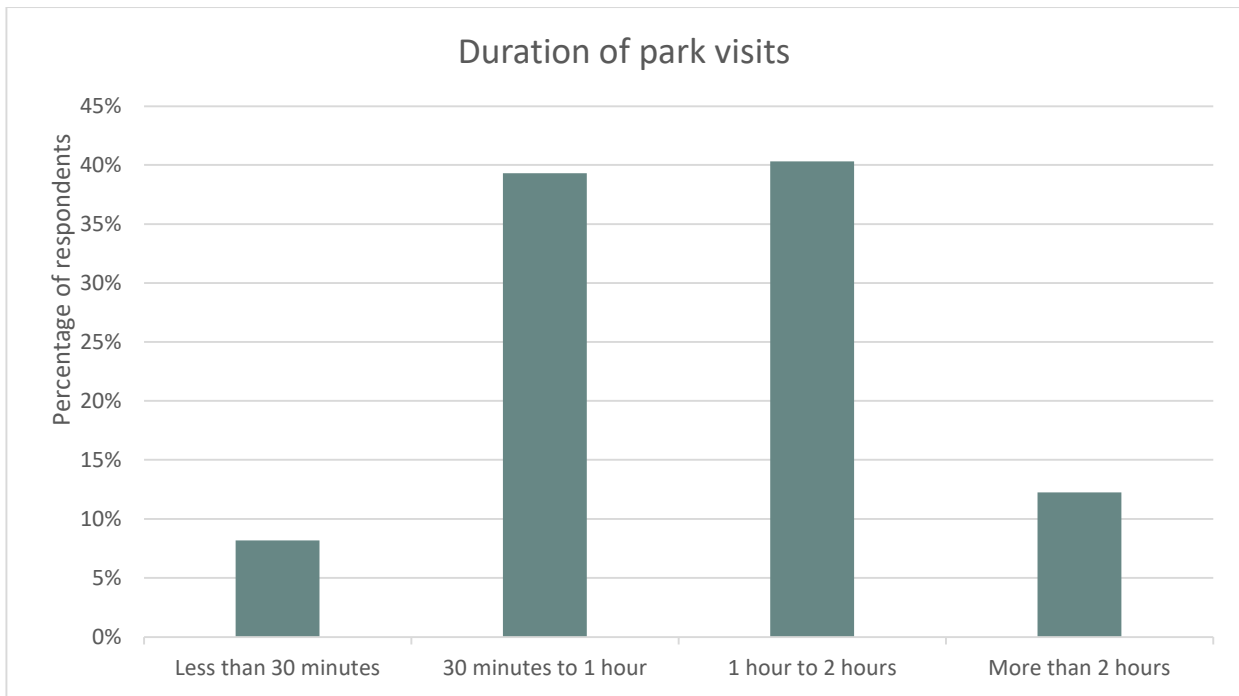


Figure 5: Duration of park visits

The most common form of transport to the park was a car, accounting for two thirds of all responses (67.2%). This is in line with respondents indicating that their favourite park is not the park closest to their house. Walking was the next most common method of travel, accounting for 24.6% of responses.

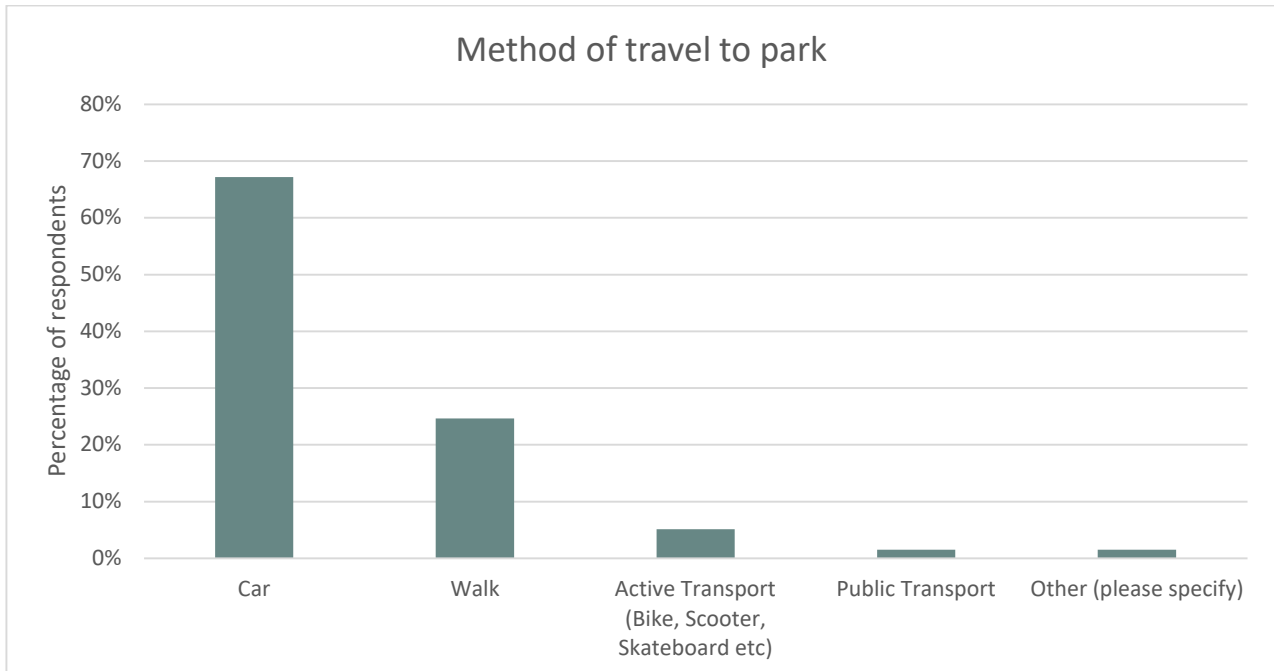


Figure 6: Usual method of travel to the park

Most respondents (68.6%) respondents would travel no more than 10 minutes to the park, however, given the method of travel, it could be assumed that this would typically be by car, and may indicate that although people are not using the park closest to their house, their favourite park is within a 10-minute drive from their home. The figure below details the distribution of travel times of respondents.

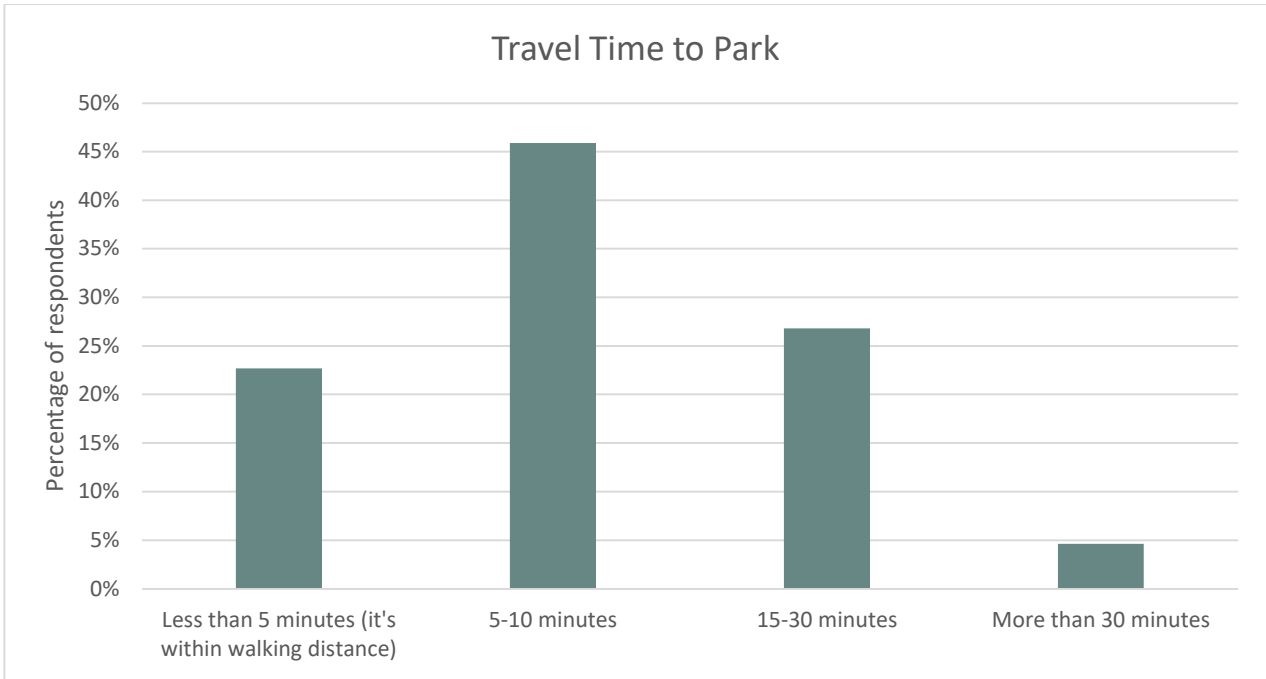


Figure 7: Travel time to park

### 2.3 Park Rating

Respondents were asked how they would rate the parks in Lake Macquarie overall using a star rating system, with one star being poor and five stars being excellent. When averaged, Lake Macquarie’s parks were rated 3.5 out of 5.



Figure 8: Average Star Rating

Over 90% of respondents rated the parks above three stars. The table and graph below detail the breakdown of each rating.

Table 3: Star Rating Responses

★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
3	15	79	97	17

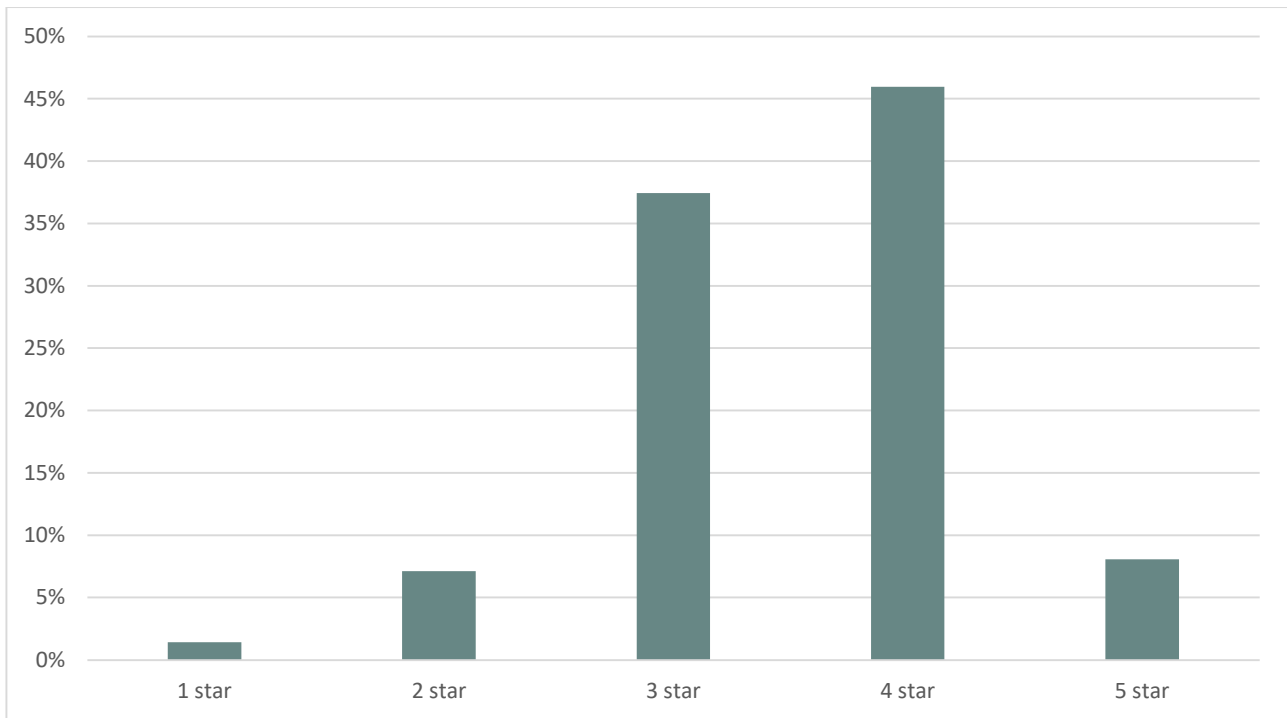


Figure 9: Park rating

## 2.4 Importance/ Performance Analysis of Park Features

An importance-performance analysis first seeks information on the elements that are important to respondents and then asks how well these elements are being delivered. It helps to understand which elements may be over or under performing in consideration of community expectations/ needs.

Respondents were asked to indicate how important certain features of parks are to them. Response options included: 'not important', 'somewhat important', 'important', 'very important', 'extremely important' with a corresponding weighting of 1-5 respectively. To analyse the results, a weighted average was determined.

The most important park element is 'Natural Shade' (weighted score 4.36), followed by 'Access to clean amenities' (4.26), 'Rubbish Bins' (4.26) and 'Access to nature' (3.89).

The least important elements were 'Dog off leash areas' (2.19), and 'Exercise facilities' (2.20).

Next, respondents were asked to rate performance, that is, how the elements were being provided. Response options included 'very poor', 'poor', 'average', 'good' and 'excellent'. Again, a weighted average was calculated to analyse the results.

The elements that were performing the best were 'Large open spaces' (3.71) followed by 'Access to nature' (3.51) and 'Dog friendly (on leash) areas' (3.44).

By comparing the importance data and the performance data it is possible to determine those areas that may require future management action. Elements that respondents indicated were important or somewhat important, but which had performance scores amongst the lowest included 'Lighting' and 'Water Bubblers'.

It is important to look at the 'gap' between the importance and performance scores in order to identify those elements that are not meeting expectations. Those elements with the largest importance/ performance gap include:

- Access to clean amenities
- Rubbish bins
- Natural shade.

While not as large, there are also notable importance/ performance gaps for:

- Walk/ cycle access
- Access to nature; and
- Seating.

Figure 10 shows the importance-performance analysis. The dark columns indicate 'importance', the light columns indicate 'performance' and the red columns illustrate the gap between importance and performance. A 'positive' gap indicates that importance is greater than performance and a feature is therefore not meeting expectations, while a 'negative' gap indicates features are performing above expectations.

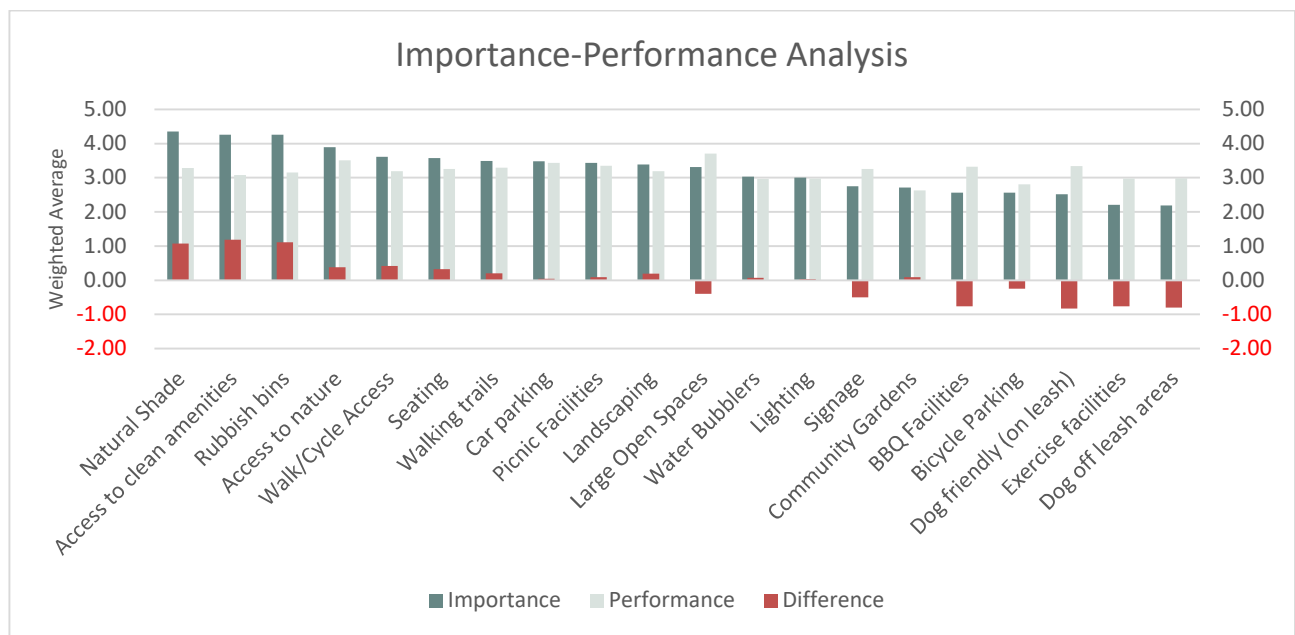


Figure 10: Park Feature Importance vs. Performance

## 2.5 Barriers to Park Use

Respondents were asked to indicate what barriers make it difficult for them to access Council's parks. As shown at Figure 11, the most common barriers were:

- Lack of shade (35.63%),
- Too crowded (27.01%),
- No public amenities (22.41%),
- Poorly maintained (20.69%), and
- Lack of pathways (20.11%).

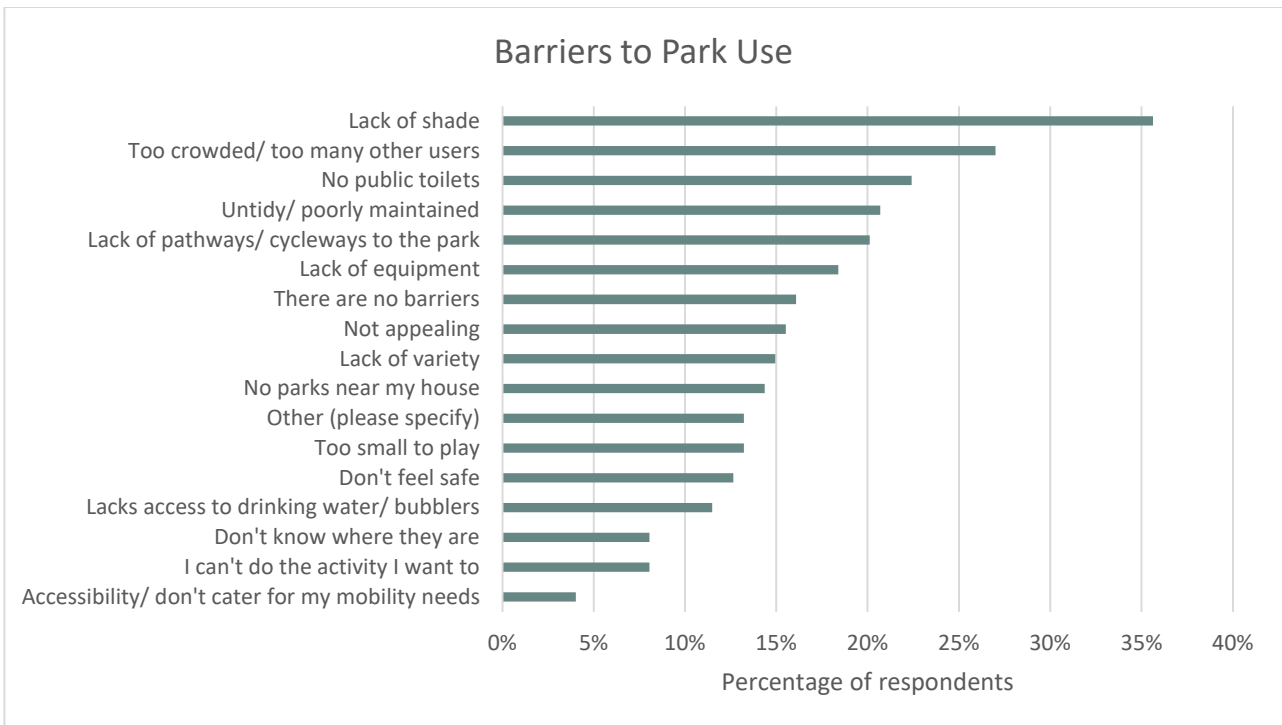


Figure 11: Barriers to accessing Council parks

## 2.6 Playspace Use

The vast majority of respondents (70%) stated they were a parent of children using playspaces followed by 15% that were grandparents.

The predominant age ranges of children was 6-12 years with about a third of respondents (35%) stating this being the age of their children. The 3-6 years age range was second highest with 30% and the 0-3 years third at 26%.

Very few parents and carers reported using playspaces with older children (12 plus) which may lean toward the notion that they are not being specifically designed for this age cohort, or alternatively (or in addition to), older children will tend to play and 'hang out' with their friends in their own spaces and at other times.

5% of respondents stated the question was not applicable to them which may reflect the 5% of people stating their capacity of use of playspaces as being 'other', which comprised adults that used playspaces without children, or those whose children had now grown up and were therefore not regular users of these spaces.

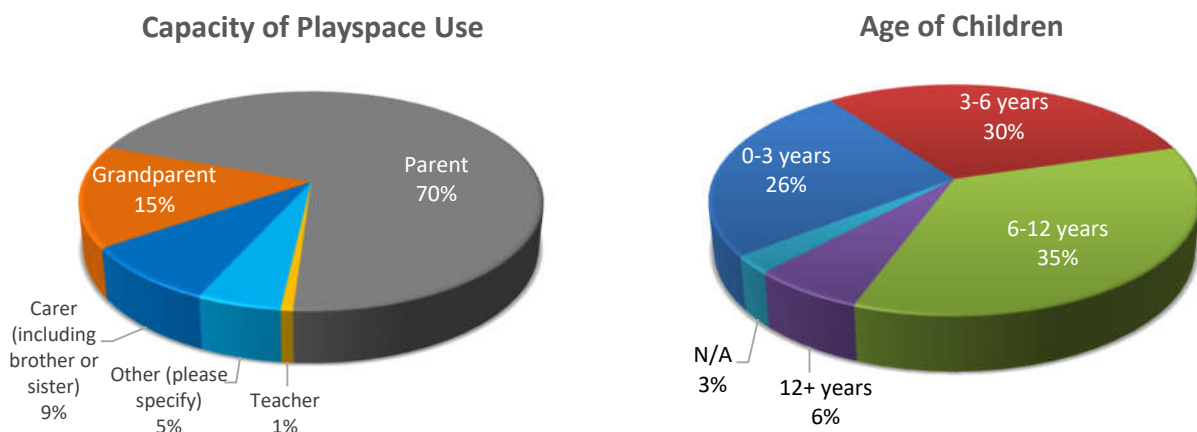


Figure 12: Playspace Use



## 2.7 Popular Playspaces

The most popular playspace by far was Speers Point followed by Warner Park, Webb Park, Reay Park and to a lesser degree Pasterfield Sporting Complex, Thomas Halton Park and Rathmines Park.

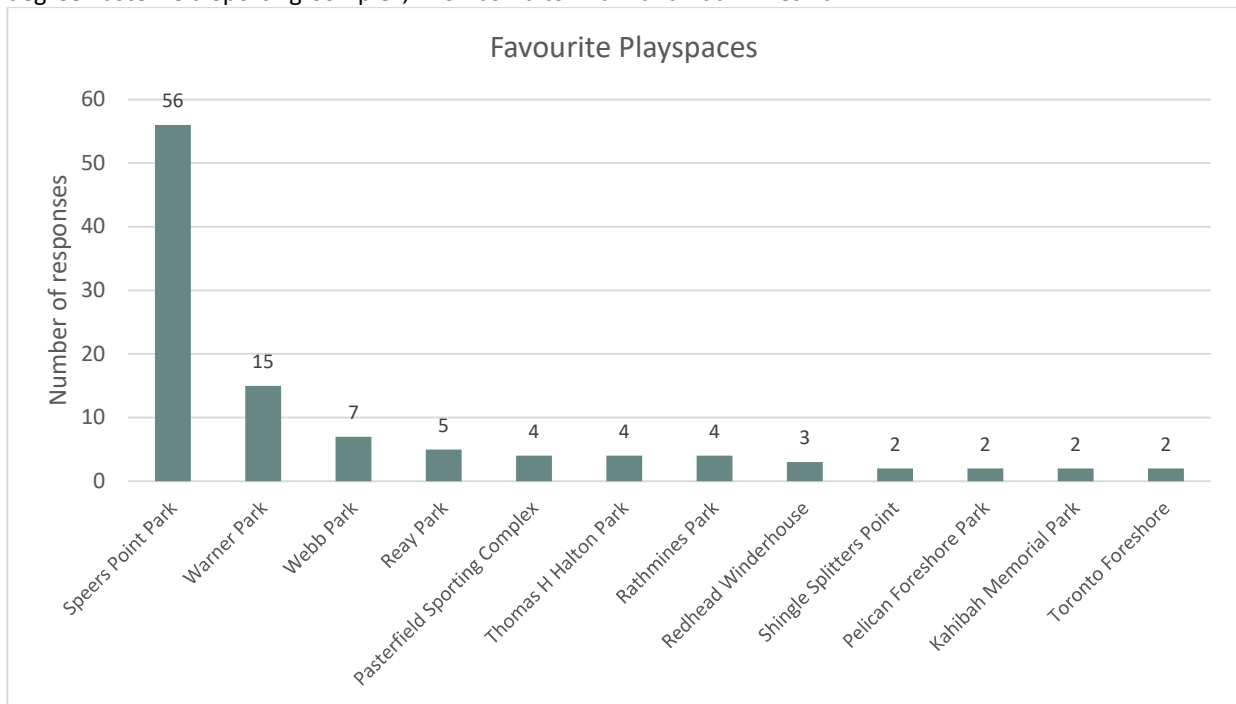


Figure 13: Favourite playspaces

As shown in the wordcloud below, the main reasons given for their popularity was the range and variety of equipment as well as being safe and having plenty of shade and ancillary services such as BBQ's, cafes, public amenities and other services and special feature. This aligns with the playspace development model in that the greater range of opportunity tends to lead to higher classifications of parks.



Figure 14: What people like most about their favourite playspace

## 2.8 Importance-Performance of Playspaces

When asked to consider on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being low and 5 high, important aspects for playspaces compared with how they were performing or being perceived across the council area, the top areas of perceived importance for playspaces were:

1. Clean and welcoming (4.51)
2. Being safe (4.47)
3. Having shade (4.42)
4. Have public amenities (4.19) and
5. Having a variety of equipment (4.16)

The areas of greatest concern whereby the gap between importance and perception was the greatest and therefore to be considered as areas of action for Council is seen in Table 4 with those aspects the community considered being well provided for highlighted in Table 5: with only near to shops and picnic and BBQ facilities being seen as positive elements.

**Table 4: Areas of greatest concern**

Rank	Greatest Area of Concern Not Being Met	Gap
1	Having shade	-1.52
2	Opportunities for children with disabilities	-1.27
3	Clean and Welcoming	-1.20
4	Fenced or away from roads	-1.08
5	Variety of equipment	-1.07
6	Opportunities for older children	-1.02

**Table 5: Perceived areas being catered for**

Rank	Greatest Area of Need Being Met	Gap
1	Near to shops	+0.73
2	Has picnic or BBQ facilities	+0.22
3	Has good car parking	- 0.04
4	Has open space	- 0.08
5	Near to home	- 0.23
6	Has special features	- 0.27

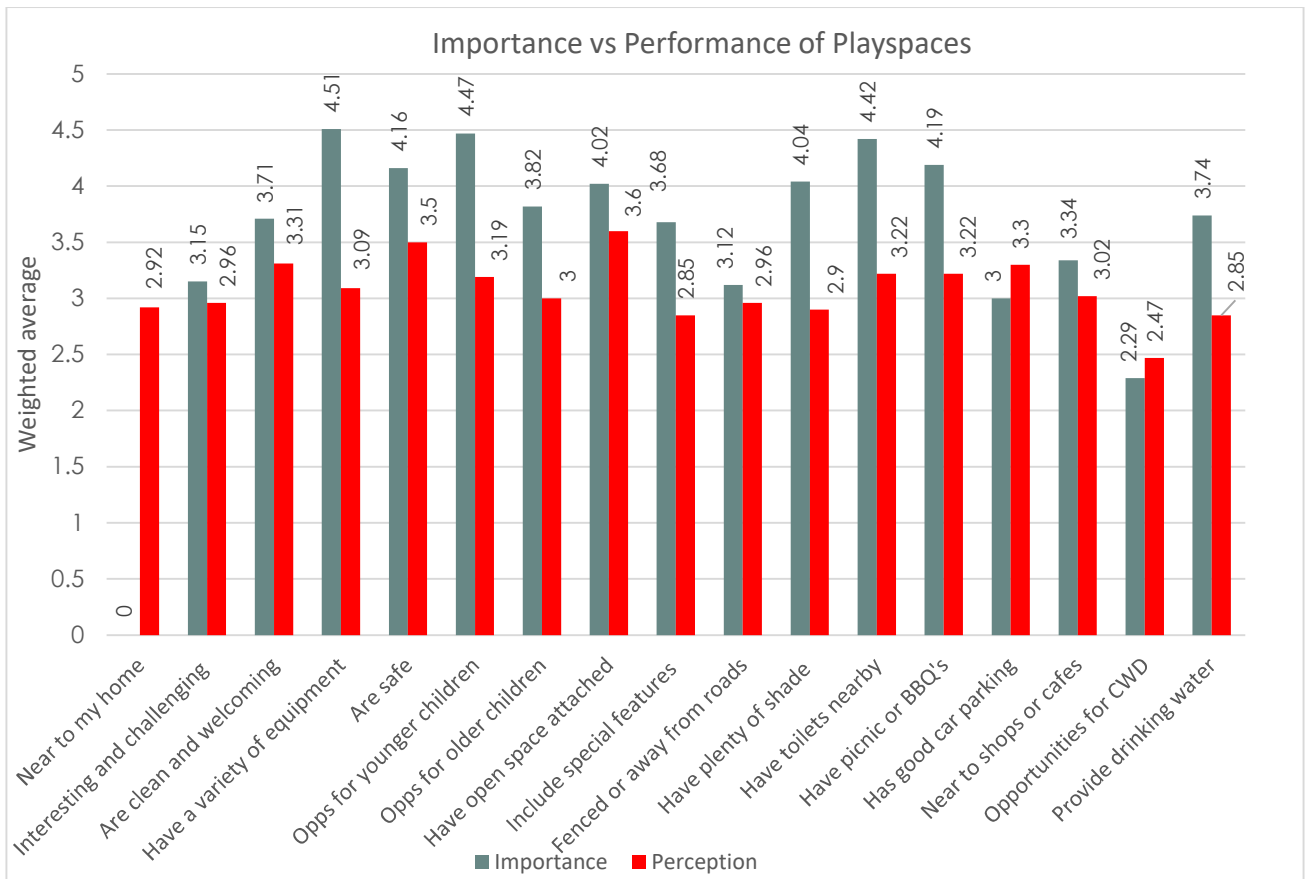


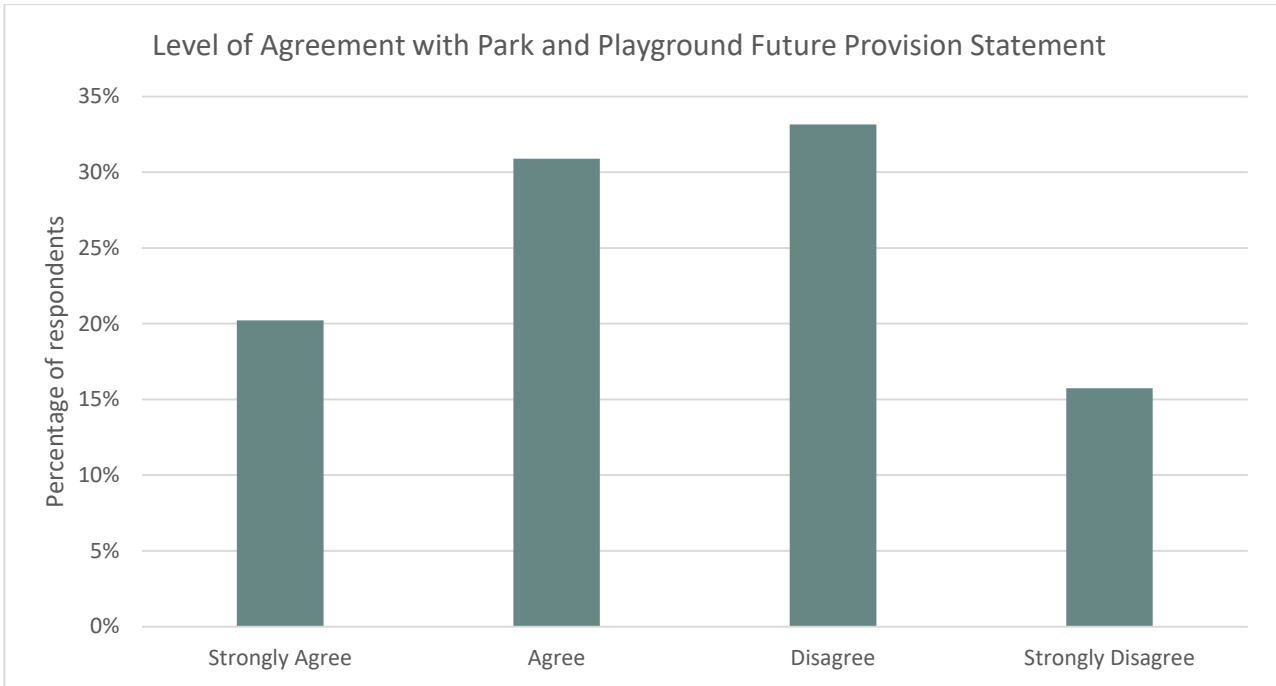
Figure 15: Combined importance vs performance of playspaces

## 2.9 Park Planning and Priorities

An important part of the survey was to understand the community’s position on the future direction of park and playground development in Lake Macquarie. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement:

*Council manages a number of diverse facilities, including over 140 parks and 114 playgrounds. Delivering a high-quality service across the whole City can be challenging. Please select your level of agreement with the following Statement: "I would like to see Council provide well distributed larger parks and playgrounds with higher quality facilities and more diverse options, even if that means fewer small local parks or more simplified development of small parks."*

Responses were evenly split with those agreeing accounting for 51.12% and those opposed accounting for 48.88%.

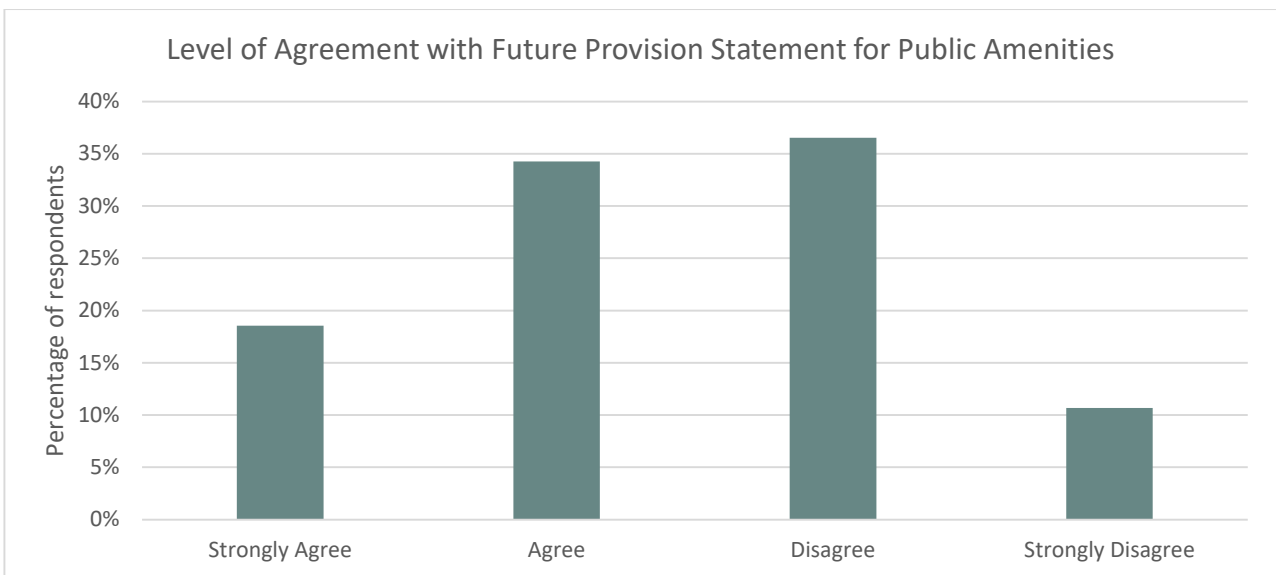


**Figure 16: Park and Playground Provision Direction**

A similar question was asked relating to the future direction of public amenity provision in the LGA., with the statement reading:

*Council manages a number of diverse facilities, including over 135 public amenities. Delivering a high-quality service across the whole City can be challenging. Please select your level of agreement with the following Statement: "I would like to see Council provide higher quality public amenities, even if that means closing some poorer quality or older public amenities."*

Again, respondents were equally split over how Council should provide public amenities, with those agreeing to the statement accounting for 52.81%, and those opposed 47.18%.



**Figure 17: Public Amenity Provision Direction**

## 2.10 Future Involvement

In order to understand community appetite for future contribution to/ involvement in the planning, design and management of parks, playgrounds and public amenities, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they would like to be involved. Approximately 80% of respondents answered the question, with 46% (80 respondents) indicating they would like to be involved in the planning, design and management of parks playgrounds and public amenities. Those respondents were then asked to indicate how they would like to be involve by selecting from a list of options. Results are summarised in the table below.

**Table 6: How respondents seek to be involved in future planning, design and management of parks, playgrounds and public amenities**

Ways to be involved	Response rate	Number of Responses
Input into playground design	60.71%	51
Input into park design	55.95%	47
Tree Planting	34.52%	29
Report maintenance needs to Council	34.52%	29
Adopt-a-park program or similar (organised group that assists in maintaining and developing a park)	22.62%	19
Landcare/ environmental group or similar	20.24%	17
Volunteer park clean up (rubbish etc.)	20.24%	17
Working Bees	20.24%	17
I only want to be informed	19.05%	16

## 2.11 Future Priorities

Respondents were asked what they would consider their 'top priority' for parks, playgrounds and public amenities. Responses were categorised into key themes, which are summarised in the tables and graphs that follow.

### Parks

Table 7: Park Priorities

Theme	Percentage of responses (No. of Responses)	Example Quote
Increased Shade (Natural and Structured (n=4))	17.32% (22)	<i>"To have more trees." "Natural shade, open space." "More shaded areas and seating."</i>
More pathways and trails	12.60% (16)	<i>"Cycleway access." "Concrete paths for access thru in wet weather soggy ground." "Accessible via connected network of footpaths from surrounding residential area."</i>
Increased maintenance of parks	12.60% (16)	<i>"Keeping them well maintained and open for multi-use." "Better garden landscaping to create lush spaces to be in." "Well maintained green spaces of varying sizes &amp; spaced around communities."</i>
Enhanced natural environment (more access to nature and tree planting)	7.87% (10)	<i>"Preserving and improving environmental features." "Enhance the presence of biodiversity and trees." "Replace dead trees with a funding allocation."</i>
Improved park distribution	7.09% (9)	<i>"Providing play space to cut off communities." "I think it is important that everyone has a park or playground they can walk or ride to nearby. They should include access to nature and shade. They should provide activities for a range of age groups and abilities."</i>



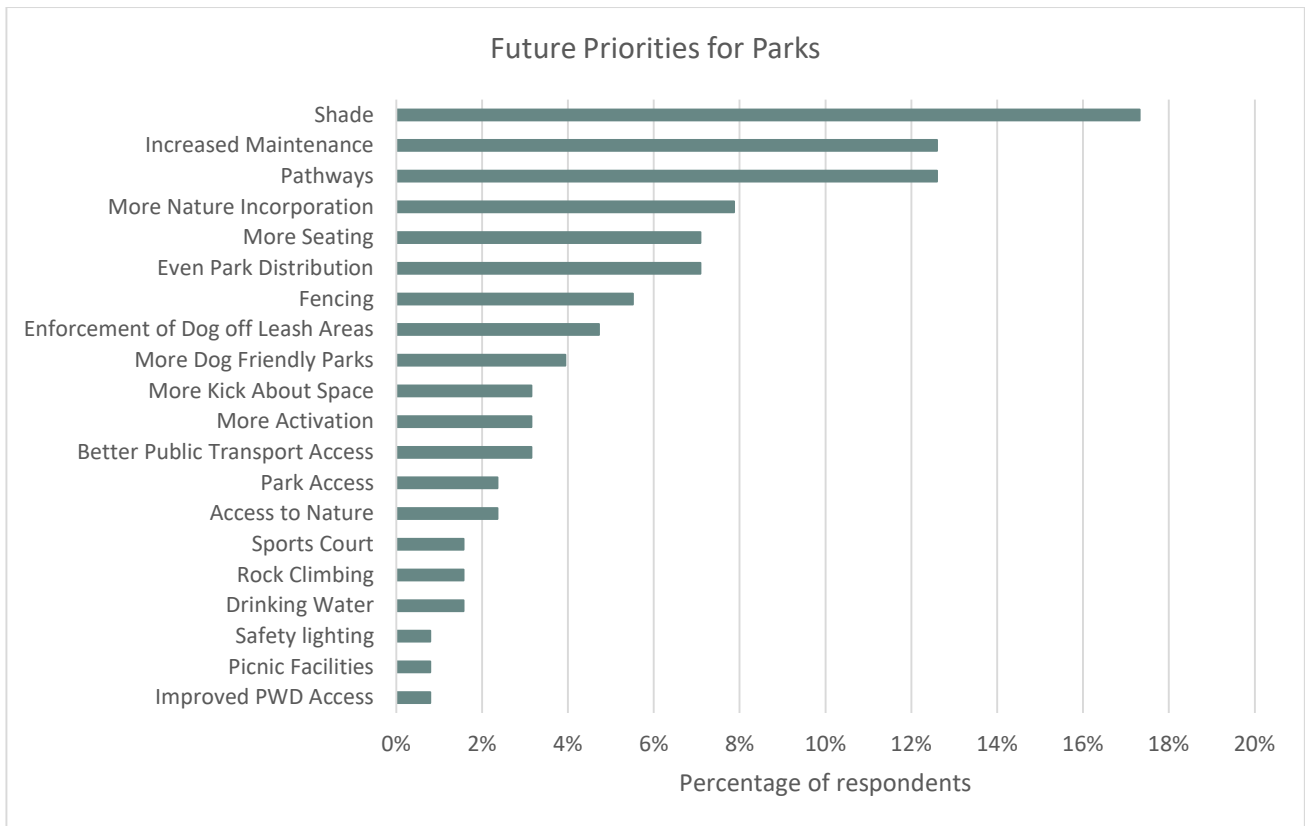


Figure 18: Park Priorities

## Playgrounds

The top priority for playgrounds was more variety (31.62%, n=43). This included specific comments requesting more variety of equipment for toddlers/ young children (n=7), more multi-age equipment/ playgrounds that cater for all ages (n=7) and more for older children (n=3). The second highest priority was shade (17.65%, n=24) with some respondents specifying natural shade (n=5) and some shade sails/ cloth (n=3).

Table 8: Playground Priorities

Theme	Percentage of responses (No. of Responses)	Example Quote
More variety/ more activations	31.62% (43)	<i>"Diversity of equipment for age ranges." "Variety, challenge and interesting imaginative equipment, not just the standard tower with a short slide and a few swings. Innovation and imagination."</i>
Shade	17.65% (24)	<i>"Broader shade natural or manmade." "More shade sails and trees." "Shade over equipment."</i>
Fencing	11.03% (15)	<i>"Fenced to make safe."</i>
Maintenance	9.56% (13)	<i>"Rubbish bins emptied and maintaining equipment." "Maintain to a high standard and replace equipment as required."</i>
Safety	5.88% (8)	<i>"Safe equipment." "More variety and maintained so that they are safe."</i>
Upgrade/ update	5.15% (7)	<i>"Update the older and aging smaller playgrounds with newer equipment and climbing frames." "Update old equipment."</i>
More natural areas/ nature play	4.41% (6)	<i>"More nature areas for kids to play and learn." "Natural playgrounds, wonderful risky play spaces."</i>

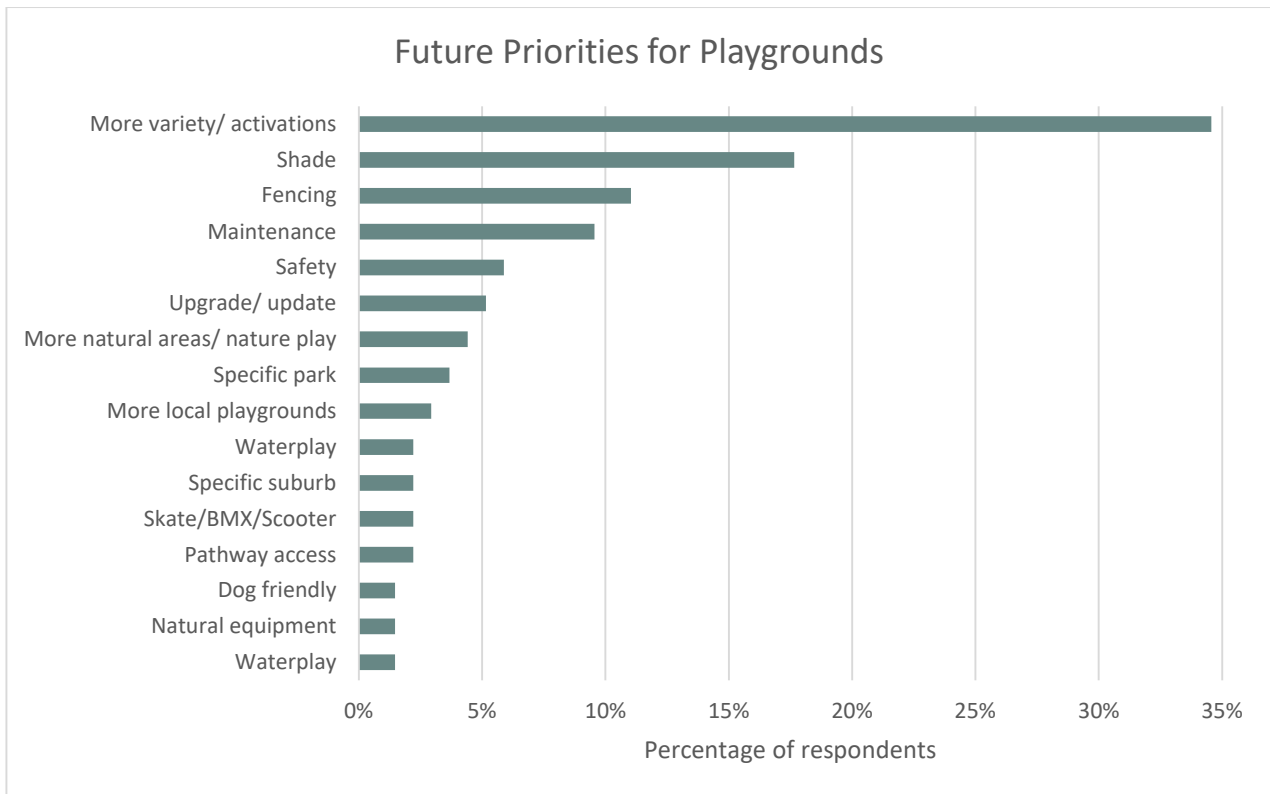


Figure 19: Playground Priorities

## Public Amenities

Table 9: Public Amenities Priorities

Theme	Percentage of responses (No. of Responses)	Example Quote
Increased cleaning of public amenities	55% (66)	<i>"Well maintained public toilets, family friendly." "Clean, certainly has improved since COVID but Newcastle Council has really succeeded as you can see people cleaning and everything is clean."</i>
Safer Facilities	20% (24)	<i>"Safety, maintenance, cleanliness." "Providing cleaner, safer and more modern facilities."</i>
Upgrade facilities	16% (19)	<i>"Modern, open, safe (CPTED<sup>1</sup>), clean." "More updated facilities." "More modern facilities, not 1970 modular type."</i>
More public amenities	10% (12)	<i>"Having more access to public toilets for all parks big or small." "Public toilets in more parks."</i>
Improved maintenance	6% (7)	<i>"Regular maintenance and repair of damage sometimes deliberately caused." "Repair damage promptly."</i>

<sup>1</sup> Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

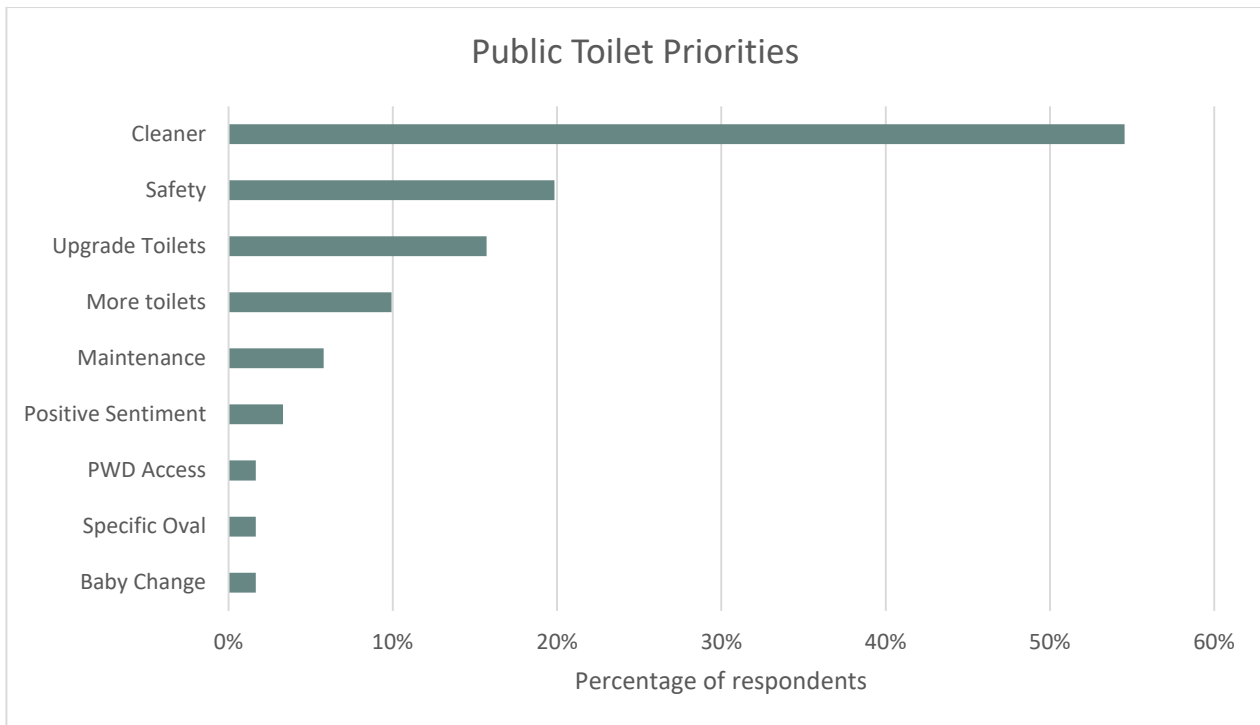


Figure 20: Public Toilet Priorities

## 2.12 Additional Comments

Finally, respondents were given an opportunity to provide additional comments regarding their vision for parks, playgrounds and public amenities in Lake Macquarie. Priorities have been categorised into themes, with the top four priorities being summarised in the table below.

Table 10: Top Priorities for Lake Macquarie’s Parks, Playground and Public Amenities Vision

Top Priorities	Percentage of responses (No. of Responses)	Example Quote
More even park distribution across the LGA (i.e. more, smaller parks within walking distance)	17.65% (N=15)	<p>“More focus and attention to smaller local parks and playgrounds that allow an option that is walking distance for families and appealing to visit.”</p> <p>“Whilst the larger parks like Speers Point are great, it is still so important to have local parks that are within an easy walk to the local community where people can meet and play in their local neighbourhood.”</p>
Improved pedestrian links to parks	11.76% (N=10)	<p>“I’d really like to see the council invest more in active transport infrastructure connecting residential areas with local parks and playgrounds.”</p> <p>“Smaller but more readily accessible by foot would be far better.”</p>
Increased shade at parks	9.41% (N=8)	<p>“The lack of shade in almost all parks we attend is disturbing.”</p> <p>“Most of our playgrounds are unusable during the main period of the day.”</p>
Upgrade parks/ improve park activation	7.06% (N=6)	<p>“Just a more updated park near home. It needs new equipment and more secure areas.”</p>

The majority of comments (20.0%, N=17) related to specific parks. These are summaries at Section 2.12.1.

It is worth noting that six comments (7.06%) expressed positive sentiments about Council’s parks. For example:

*“...since having my son 18 months ago, it’s been great getting out to visit the different parks / playgrounds in Lake Mac. Your playground guide on your website is fantastic, and helps us pick parks that are suitable for our son. (Thank you!)”*

*“The parks and playgrounds here are amazing. The reason they are so good is that they all have exciting and varied play equipment aimed at a range of age groups from baby to older kids. They are landscaped. Fenced, have good public toilets.”*

*“I think the Council has done a wonderful job with regards to parks and playgrounds.... when I take my grandkids to all different parks around the Lake, there are heaps of families and kids enjoying them, because Council makes them very family friendly (equipment, paths, seating, BBQs and public toilets).”*

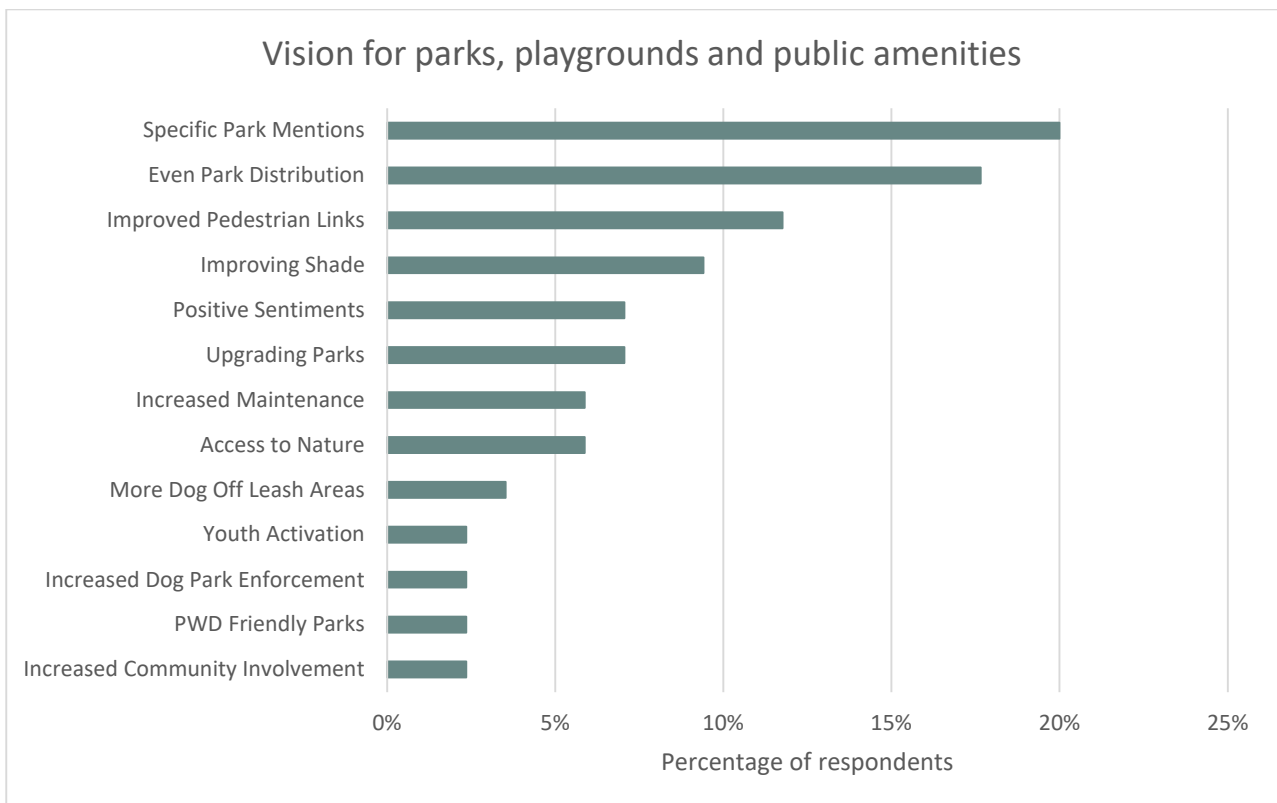


Figure 21: Additional Comment Themes

## 2.12.1 Responses Relating to Specific Parks/ sites

Throughout the survey questions, there were a number of comments related to specific park/ playground sites, or suburbs where parks/ playground provision is considered inadequate. These emerged in response to the question seeking additional comments and also the question seeking reasons for travelling further to access certain parks. Comments are summarised below:

**Table 11: Survey input related to specific parks**

Park/Playground/ Amenity Building	Suburb	Catchment	Comment
Wyee Oval			Upgrade
Irene Austin Reserve (N=2)	Morrisset Park	Morrisset	Better fencing Update public amenities
New Park Request	Southwest of the Lake		Another park like Speers Point to service the areas south west of the lake
Pendlebury Playground (N=4)	Bonnells Bay	Morrisset	Play equipment not good and not in good condition Maintenance Upgrade Improve safety of platform Fencing
New park at Morrisset	Morrisset	Morrisset	Shade
Cardiff Park	Cardiff	Glendale	Environmentally eroded. Needs a makeover. Opportunities to link with fitness/ exercise/ shared pathways/ trails in Cardiff South adjoining Wilkinson Park, Cardiff ovals, Cardiff Park Land care area, Cardiff Off Leash area, Cardiff south wetlands land care area, unmaintained John St LMCC reserve linked by Historic South Wallsend Railway Junction Easement
RMYC Jetty Toronto	Toronto	Toronto	Maintenance of rubbish bins
No specific site	Catherin Hill Bay	Belmont	Needs facility for sport and children's play. Land where demolished bowling club was and on existing run down sports oval or purchase land Middle Camp Tennis Club and renovate
Sylvia Grozdanovski	Gateshead	Charlestown	Upgrade to modern playground

Park/Playground/ Amenity Building	Suburb	Catchment	Comment
Swansea Foreshore (Coon Island)	Swansea	Belmont	Redesign. Spend money on lake foreshore areas outside Warners Bay and Toronto.
Lake Forest Drive Reserve	Murrays Beach	North Wallarah	Build with multi-use courts, BBQ, shelter, play equipment, water features, bike track.
Caves Beach	Caves Beach	Belmont	No specific comment-improve?
Thomas H Halton Park	Eleebana	Charlestown	Upgrade to enable more use
Glendale East Playground	Glendale	Glendale	Upgrade to all appealing option within walking distance of residences
Mount Sugarloaf	West Wallsend	Glendale	Improved hiking and bushwalking facilities Picnicking and BBQ facilities Environmental education resources (flora and fauna) Commercial café opportunity
Jewells Park	Jewells	Charlestown	Old and in need of upgrade
Cooranbong Park	Cooranbong	Morisset	Not stimulating
St John Memorial Park	Tingira Heights	Charlestown	Unsuitable and not stimulating for children
Baxter Park	Nords Wharf	Belmont	Not good play equipment
<i>Charlestown</i>	<i>Charlestown</i>	<i>Charlestown</i>	<i>No parks within walking distance</i>
Cams Wharf	Cams Wharf	Belmont	Clear space to enable lake view
Martinsville Playground	Martinsville	Morisset	Carpark
Lake Foreshore Reserve	Murrays Beach	North Wallarah	New public amenities at jetty - rebuild



## 2.13 Survey Summary

Some key observations and outcomes are evident from the community survey:

- The majority of respondents preferred to travel further to use their favourite park as opposed to the park closest to their home. However, they were not likely to travel a great distance with the most common travel time being 5-10 minutes.
- The need for better local park provision was evident in some suburbs where provision of developed parks or easy walking access was seen as limited.
- Respondents generally felt that the provision and performance of park and public amenities was adequate, yet not excellent.
- The overall rating of parks as 3.5 stars out of five, indicates that while there are many positives about Lake Macquarie's parks and many park aspects are considered satisfactory to good, few parks were considered excellent.
- Strong themes emerged throughout relating to equitable distribution of parks across the LGA, pathway connections and linkages and quality embellishments, particularly shade.
- There was a strong environmental/ nature theme evident, with access to nature, proximity to the lake, nature play, trees and community gardens featuring consistently in written comments.
- The community values the provision of public amenities and would like to see cleaner, safer and more modern public amenities with improved maintenance.
- More diversity in playgrounds and more shade for play spaces was a consistent theme along with mentions of safety relating to keeping play spaces away from roads or providing fencing where risks were adjacent.

## 3. Shape Lake Mac

Council’s community engagement portal, Shape Lake Mac was used to:

- Promote the project and provide information about the strategy and the benefits of parks and play
- Provide a link to the community survey
- Facilitate online discussion forums

A total of **1,218 participants** visited at least one page on the portal. Of these, **103 participants** contributed to the online discussion forums.

### 3.1 Online Discussion Forums

The online discussion forums sought input on six key questions relating to:

- Favourite parks or playgrounds
- Specific park upgrade opportunities
- What makes Lake Mac’s parks special
- Ideas for improvement of parks and playspaces
- Examples of parks and playspaces outside Lake Mac with features that should be considered for Lake Mac
- Community appetite for involvement in future planning, design or management of parks.

The forums enabled participants to provide comments and/ or agree with comments made by others. A summary of the key themes emerging from the online discussion questions is provided below.

#### 3.1.1 Favourite Parks or Playgrounds

There were 37 responses to the question: *“What is your favourite park or playground in Lake Mac and why?”* Responses are summarised below:

Favourite Park	No. of Responses (N) & Number of “Agrees” (A) (if applicable)	Reasons
Speers Point Park	N=8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade trees</li> <li>• Play opportunities for older children</li> <li>• Large open spaces</li> <li>• Variety of opportunities</li> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Amenity</li> </ul>
Webb Park	N=7 A=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of equipment</li> <li>• Public amenities</li> <li>• Seating and tables</li> <li>• Playground equipment</li> <li>• Play opportunities for older children</li> <li>• Shade trees</li> <li>• Visibility</li> <li>• Peaceful</li> </ul>
Thomas H Halton Park	N=4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade trees</li> <li>• Peaceful</li> <li>• Variety of opportunities</li> </ul>

Favourite Park	No. of Responses (N) & Number of "Agrees" (A) (if applicable)	Reasons
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Space</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Dog friendly</li> </ul>
Blackalls Park	N=4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade trees</li> <li>• Covered facilities</li> <li>• Amenity</li> <li>• Parking</li> </ul>
Croudace Bay	N=3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade trees</li> <li>• Running track</li> <li>• Dog park/ dog friendly</li> <li>• Wildlife</li> <li>• Landcare</li> <li>• Jetty</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Open Space</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Skatepark</li> <li>• Bike path</li> <li>• Sailing club</li> </ul>
Kahibah Memorial Park	N=3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location – close to home and shops</li> <li>• Quiet</li> </ul>
Lake Foreshore Reserve	N=3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location – close to home</li> <li>• Lakeside</li> <li>• Picnic facilities</li> <li>• Playground</li> </ul>
Reay Park	N=2 A=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Shade Trees</li> <li>• Peaceful</li> </ul>
Warners Bay Foreshore	N=2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of opportunities</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Picnic Facilities</li> <li>• Amenity</li> </ul>
Pelican Foreshore Park	N=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade Trees</li> <li>• Fenced</li> <li>• Playground arrangement</li> </ul>
Harold Wesley Knight Park	N=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fenced</li> </ul>
Mount Sugarloaf Reserve	N=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lookout</li> <li>• Peaceful</li> <li>• Natural Environment</li> <li>• Safe</li> </ul>
Bennett Park	N=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground</li> </ul>
Edwards Park	N=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sculpture Park</li> <li>• Shade trees</li> <li>• Open space</li> <li>• Dog friendly</li> <li>• Amenity</li> <li>• Peaceful</li> </ul>
Bernie Goodwin Reserve	N=1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground</li> </ul>

Favourite Park	No. of Responses (N) & Number of "Agrees" (A) (if applicable)	Reasons
Rathmines Park	N=1	• Amenity
Toronto Foreshore Playground	N=1	• Amenity
Cameron Park	N=1	• Playground
Myuna Bay Foreshore Reserve	N=1	•
Bonnells Bay Reserve	N=1	• Natural environment • Pathway
Clarence Street Reserve	N=1	• Playground
Shingle Splitters Point	N=1	• Natural environment
Beaumarias Park	N=1	• Playground

The most common features of "favourite" parks are illustrated below:

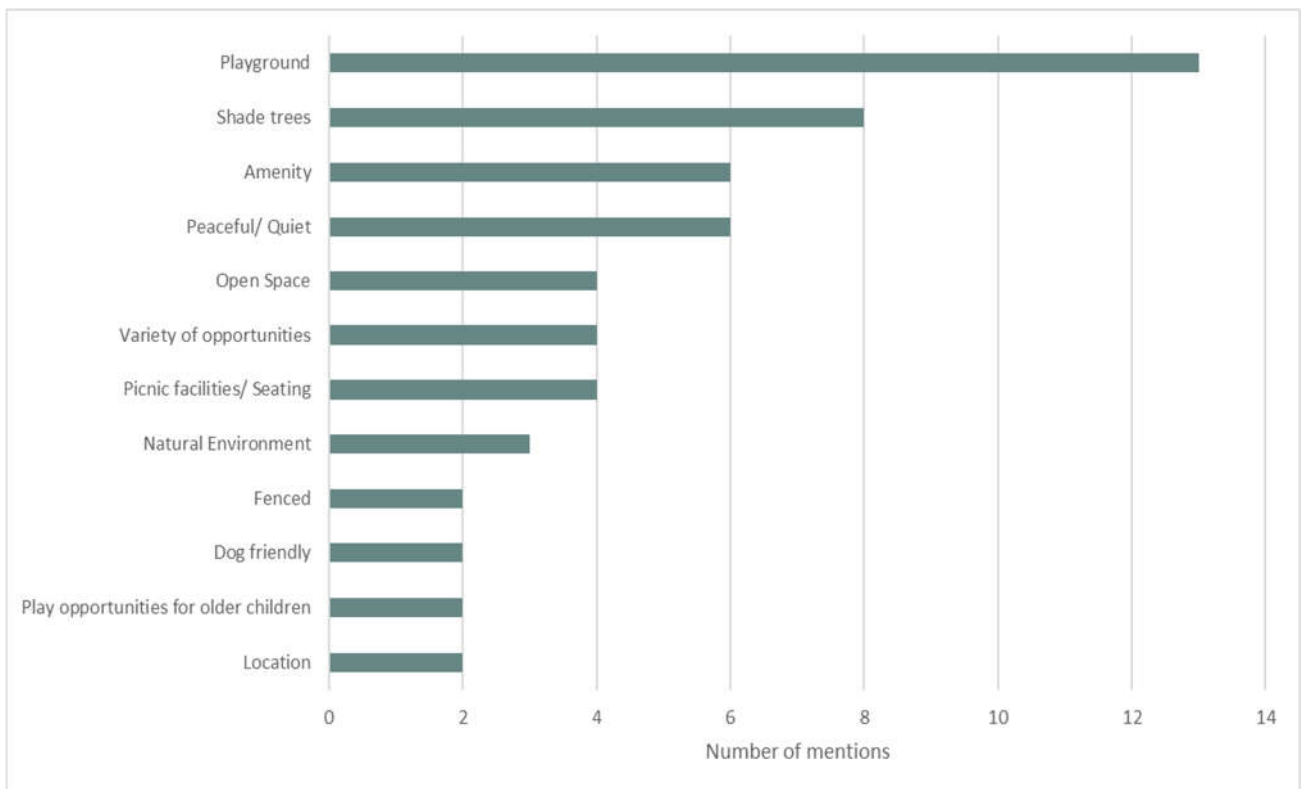


Figure 22: Most common features of favourite parks

### 3.1.2 Park Upgrades

There were 57 responses to the question “Are there any parks you think should be upgraded? If so, what would you like to see in that park?” Responses are summarised below.

Park	Suburb	No. of Responses (N) & No. of “Agrees” (A) (if applicable)	Catchment	Comments
Alkrington Avenue Park	Fishing Point	N=2	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restoration and revegetation.</li> <li>• Stop using as construction site and quarry.</li> </ul>
Allambee Park	Valentine	N=2	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Exercise equipment</li> <li>• Markets</li> <li>• Involve local community groups, clubs and businesses.</li> <li>• Shade over playground.</li> </ul>
Attunga Park	Charlestown	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature elements.</li> <li>• All ages playground.</li> <li>• Involve school kids.</li> </ul>
Bay Road Reserve	Bolton Point	N=2	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fence along Bay Rd.</li> <li>• Natural boulders for outdoor climbing.</li> </ul>
Bennett Park	Valentine	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade over playground</li> </ul>
Bernie Goodwin Park	Morisset	N=1	Morisset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade</li> <li>• Water play</li> <li>• Decks and sand around trees</li> <li>• BBQ shelter.</li> <li>• Toilet.</li> <li>• More bubblers.</li> <li>• More bins.</li> </ul>
Blackalls Park	Blackalls Park	N=2	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade.</li> <li>• New equipment.</li> <li>• New public amenities</li> </ul>
Chapman Oval Playground	Swansea	N=1	Belmont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More equipment</li> <li>• Seating</li> </ul>
Clarence Street Reserve	Glendale	N=2	Glendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade</li> </ul>
Cooranbong Park	Cooranbong	N=1	North Cooranbong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All access playground (Liberty swing)</li> </ul>
Cooranbong Park	Morisset	N=1	Morisset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade playground</li> </ul>
Eleebana Oval	Eleebana	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade park.</li> <li>• Inclusive, all ages playground.</li> </ul>
Fern Valley Road Reserve	Cardiff	N=1	Glendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playground maintenance.</li> <li>• Upgrade playground to suit ages 3-12.</li> </ul>
Forest Hills Reserve	Garden Suburb	N=1 A=2	Glendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade</li> </ul>

Park	Suburb	No. of Responses (N) & No. of "Agrees" (A) (if applicable)	Catchment	Comments
Frank Watkins Memorial Park	Dudley	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade and upgrade.</li> <li>Skateramp.</li> </ul>
Hampton Street Reserve	Carey Bay	N=1	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Running/ exercise track.</li> <li>Playground.</li> <li>Half basketball court.</li> <li>Dog park.</li> </ul>
Heywood Wilkinson Park	Whitebridge	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New play equipment - climbing, flying fox, swings. BBQ area.</li> </ul>
Jewells Parade Reserve	Jewells	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playground upgrade similar to Mount Hutton or Warners Bay</li> </ul>
Kilaben Bay Reserve	Kilaben Bay	N=1	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace jetty baths.</li> <li>Fix outdoor shower</li> <li>Repair gazebo.</li> </ul>
Lake Foreshore Reserve	Murrays Beach		North Wallarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade children's playground. Replace timber logs (dangerous sharp edges)</li> </ul>
Lakelands Reserve	Lakelands	N=1	Glendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shade</li> <li>Public amenities</li> <li>BBQ</li> </ul>
Mawson Close Reserve	Caves Beach	N=1 A=1	Belmont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor shower</li> </ul>
Molly O'Connor Park	Redhead	N=5	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underutilised as dog off lead park.</li> <li>Potential for older children opportunities e.g. pump track, BMX track, informal bike track – "living" gravel track to be designed, created and modified by kids.</li> <li>Fence dog exercise area</li> </ul>
Murrays Beach	Murrays Beach	N=1 A=1	North Wallarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade and clean up</li> </ul>
Murrays Beach Playground	Murrays Beach	N=1 A=2	North Wallarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade wooden structures near the jetty</li> </ul>
Neegulba Park	Macquarie Hills	N=1	Glendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade</li> </ul>
Pendlebury Park	Bonnells Bay	N=2	Morisset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade.</li> <li>Water splash pad with shade.</li> <li>Keep dogs away from play areas.</li> </ul>
Rathmines Park	Rathmines	N=1	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade heritage area.</li> </ul>
Reay Park	Dudley	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drainage upgrade of field.</li> </ul>
Reids Reserve	Swansea Heads	N=2 A=2	Belmont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shaded picnic areas.</li> <li>Trees.</li> </ul>
Edwards Park (Sculpture Park)	Booragul	N=1	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undercover seating</li> </ul>
St John's Memorial Park	Tingara Heights	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional play equipment.</li> <li>Shade.</li> </ul>
Sylvia Grozdanovski Park	Gateshead	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playground upgrade</li> </ul>

Park	Suburb	No. of Responses (N) & No. of "Agrees" (A) (if applicable)	Catchment	Comments
Public amenities near sailing club		N=1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade</li> </ul>
Toronto Foreshore Playground	Toronto	N=1	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New equipment</li> </ul>
Toronto Lions Park	Toronto	N=1	Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New and bigger play equipment.</li> <li>Carpark upgrade.</li> <li>Picnic tables.</li> <li>Jetty.</li> </ul>
Warner Park	Warners Bay	N=1	Glendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaning.</li> <li>Maintenance around public amenities and bins</li> </ul>
Webb Park	Redhead	N=2 A=2	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skatepark.</li> <li>Shade</li> <li>Upgrade/ maintenance to slide.</li> </ul>
Wrightson Park	Cams Wharf	N=1	Belmont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All ages playground (particularly 4-14 years).</li> <li>Bike track linking Nords Wharf to Cams Wharf.</li> <li>Swimming enclosure at Cams Wharf.</li> </ul>
Yoorala Rd next to square jetty		N=1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade to area next to jetty.</li> <li>Include bins.</li> </ul>
Lions Park	Charlestown South	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop playground in the area on the Pacific Highway near Lions Park</li> </ul>
Unspecified	Belmont North	N=1	Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bouldering Wall</li> </ul>
All Parks/ General Comments		N=2 A=3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All parks should include shade trees or shade structures.</li> </ul>
		N=1 A=3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All parks should be connected with pathways.</li> </ul>
		N=1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No upgrades. Maintain existing</li> </ul>
		N=1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult monkey bars in exercise parks.</li> </ul>
		N=1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equipment and facilities for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>

### 3.1.3 What Makes Lake Mac's Parks Special?

There were 12 responses to the question: "What makes our parks and play spaces special or unique?" Key themes emerging from the responses included:

- The large, open spaces (n=5) (A=3)
- Proximity to (or views of) the lake and beaches (n=4), (A=6)
- Big trees (n=3), (A=3)
- The natural environment and connection with nature (n=3), (A=3)
- Appeal to different ages (n=3)
- Community, social and emotional connections (n=3)
- Well maintained (n=2), (N=3)
- Location – close to home and/ or shops (n=2), (N=3)

*"Taking advantage of natural aspects, such as the lake, the bush or a lookout."*

*"A park can be special when you can connect with your community, family or friends."*

*"As a child parks offer an opportunity to use your imagination, get dirty, explore, create, make new friends and build on known friendships. Playing in a park helps kids develop many life skills..."*

*"...as an adult visiting a park... the child in you eagerly awaits you to let down your guard and explore, lay on the grass, find objects in the clouds and just enjoy those fleeting moments of a carefree, childlike curiosity and calmness."*



### 3.1.4 Improving Spaces

A total of 43 responses were provided to the question: “Do you have any ideas on how to improve parks and playspaces in Lake Mac?” Key themes are summarised below.

Key Themes	No. of Responses (N) & No. of “Agrees” (A)	Sub-Categories	No. of Responses (N) & No. of “Agrees” (A)	Additional Comment/ Detail
Playground Improvements	N=27 A=6	Shade	N=8 A=4	
		Design and equipment	N=4 A=1	Safe and functional - better slides, no fireman poles, safe placement of equipment. More diverse
		Improved softfall	N=3	Rubber, not woodchip
		Multi-age	N=2	Separate spaces for different ages
		Opportunities for older children	N=2 A=1	
		Seating	N=2	
		Creative/ nature play	N=1	
		Equipment maintenance	N=1	
		More within walking distance	N=1	
		Fenced	N=1	
		Climbing/ bouldering opportunities	N=1	
Park Embellishments	N=16 A=10	Water bubblers	N=3 A=2	Include dog water provision
		Seating	N=4	Including all abilities seating
		Shade	N=5 A=3	Including shade over picnic facilities
		More landscaping/ greenery	N=2	
		Multi-use pathways/ bike paths & parking	N=2 A=1	
		Improved picnic/ BBQ facilities	N=1 A=2	Include shade Close to play area
		Large bike education facility	N=1 A=1	
Toilet improvements	N=12 A=2	Fencing of parks that are close to roads	N=1 A=1	
		Clean & well maintained	N=5 A=2	
		Improvements to design/ embellishment	N=2	Avoid unisex public amenities unless separate children’s toilet is provided.

Key Themes	No. of Responses (N) & No. of "Agrees" (A)	Sub-Categories	No. of Responses (N) & No. of "Agrees" (A)	Additional Comment/ Detail
				Include proper seats, soap, and proper positioning of embellishments (e.g. toilet paper).
Dog Exercise/ Off Leash Management	N=7 A=1	Management of dogs in parks	N=3 A=1	Including discouraging dogs off leash in leashed areas
		Fence existing areas for new DOLAs	N=3	Near Whitebridge netball courts Dudley playground near pub Behind junior football club canteen
		Fence between dog park and road at Whitebridge	N=1	
Specific park improvements	N=6	Build coastal path at Catherine Hill Bay	N=1	
		Improve foreshore reserves on southwestern end of lake (e.g. Wyee Bay)	N=1	
		Build Heritage Park at West Wallsend	N=1	Include playspace, bike track, exercise area, heritage trail
		Improvement to playground in Morisset	N=1	Dissatisfied with upgrade
		Improve and maintain access to Munibung Hill	N=1	
		Playground in Belmont North (Siloam Drive or Lenaghan Oval)	N=1	
Other	N=6 A=3	Retain/ preserve open spaces	N=2	
		More accessible and versatile spaces near town centres providing commercial opportunities	N=1 A=3	Including opportunities for commercial activities, art, markets etc.
		Manage cyclist speed on pathways	N=1	
		Build and design parks that are reflective of local community character	N=1	
		Dirt Bike Track	N=1	

### 3.1.5 Outside Lake Mac

There were 23 contributors to the question: “Are there any examples of parks or playground facilities that you have seen elsewhere that you think should be considered in the future for Lake Mac?”. Examples were provided of parks/ playgrounds in other areas, which were categorised into ten common themes, as outlined below.

Theme	Examples Provided
Pump Track	Barrow Park, Perth
Nature Play	Ian Potter Nature Playground, Sydney Children’s Garden, Royal Botanical Gardens, Melbourne Chinaman’s Hollow Lizard Log Playground, Western Sydney Parklands
Community Garden	Adamstown Laneway Park, Newcastle
Water Play	Southbank, Brisbane Townsville Strand Muddy’s Playground Cairns Esplanade Blacktown Showgrounds, Sydney James Ruse Reserve The Entrance Orion Lagoon, Springfield QLD Darling Harbour Park
Playground	Orphanage Park, Millswood, SA Maybury Peace Park, Chinaman’s Hollow, Central Coast NSW Margaret Mahy Playground, Christchurch NZ Darling Harbour Park Nancy Bird Walton Park, Kew Griffith Park Playground, Stockton
Toilet Blocks	National Parks
Bouldering Walls	Empire Bay Central Coast Sheffield Boulders Cairns Esplanade Burnleigh Melbourne Victoria Park Brisbane Jackson Hole Virginia
Regional Park/ Parks with Multiple activations	Bicentennial Park, Tamworth NSW Blacktown Showgrounds, Sydney Southbank, Brisbane Stockton Jetty Park
All Abilities Playground	Boundless Canberra
Specific Park Embellishments: Shade Sail and Softfall Community Art Tennis Hit Up Walls	One Mile Beach Playground, Forster Graffiti Wall, Bondi Beach Empire Park, Bar Beach Newcastle

### 3.1.6 Future Planning

In response to the question: *“Are you keen to be involved in planning, design or management of parks and playgrounds in the future? If so, how do you see yourself being involved?”* there were 18 contributors, with responses being coded into the following eight common themes:

- Opportunity to have input/ be consulted (N=5, A=2)
- Coordinating input from community and stakeholders (N=3, A=4)
- Involving local kids in design of play opportunities (N=3, A=3)
- Community working bees to enhance park features (N=2, A=3)
- Council to be more responsive (N=1, A=4)
- Landcare and other volunteering options (N=1, A=3)
- Input into planning for improved access to parks for pedestrians and cyclists (N=1)
- Design and management of local play spaces (N=1, A=1)

## 3.2 Instacomment

Residents were encouraged to take a photo of their favourite park and upload it to Instagram using the hashtag #letsplayinlakemac and explain why the park is their favourite.

In total, **11 photos were uploaded from 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020** featuring the following parks/ sites:

- Fernleigh track (3 photos)
- Warners Bay Foreshore (3 photos)
- Valentine (1 photo)
- Thomas H Halton Park (2 photos)
- Generic playground photos, no location mentioned (2 photos).

Common themes mentioned through the posts were trees, sunsets, views and play.

## 4. Council Staff

A workshop was held with Council staff nominated by the Project Manager early in the project to:

- Seek input on current or emerging issues that may impact on the strategy
- Explore needs through examining current strengths, weaknesses and opportunities related to current provision and management of parks, playgrounds and public amenities
- Understand any planning, development or population impacts on the study
- Discuss future opportunities, vision and direction for parks, playgrounds and public amenities.

Key outcomes of the workshop are summarised below:

### 4.1 Emerging Issues

The following were identified as key emerging issues that may impact on the strategy:

Key Theme	Comment/ Further Information
Urban greening and heat island mitigation	Need for tree planting on public land to compensate reduction in trees on private land Council is developing an Urban Heat Strategy
Biodiversity issues and vegetation protection	The level of significance of vegetation will impact on future expansion or development of parks
Land acquisition processes	The need to involve Council's property team early in the acquisition process to better manage feasibility and land acquisition processes and timeframes. There is a need for a clear land acquisition strategy to ensure land acquisitions meet identified needs and is feasible
Disposal of community land	There is a need to identify a framework for the disposal of / alternative use of community land
Connectivity	Connectivity between parks and centres and facilities located within walking distance
Sustainable development and embellishment	Clear standards around development and embellishment that ensure sustainable asset management
Population growth and increasing density	Growth proposed includes a number of locales where density is set to increase (e.g. Charlestown) . providing for new populations here presents a challenge when existing supplies of open space are limited and there is a need to investing in upgrading the capacity of and access networks to the existing public open space assets.
Land rationalisation	Although it is contentious with the community there is a need for a process that allows for surplus land/ land not suitable for public open space to be rationalised so that investment can be transferred to suitable parks/open space. Rationalising could involve conversion of use, as well as disposal.
Contaminated Land	There is several areas based on contaminated land (past refuse sites, past industrial uses etc) throughout the LGA which impacts potential use, cost of development and remediation needs.
Increasing tourism	Increased visitors to the region will require increased park capacity and enhanced embellishments for key destinations such as foreshores and major parks like Speers Point.

Accessibility	Ensuring parks are accessible and meet DDA requirements is an ongoing challenge both for funding new development and enhancing existing parks.
Fencing of play spaces	The expectation by some community members that all play spaces should be fenced is not financially sustainable for council. Council's insurers have provided guidance on when a playspace needs to be fenced for safety (due to closeness of a road or other hazard). Better communication/explanation with the community is needed to clarify where fencing is needed such as for major play spaces.
Dog Off Leash Areas (DOLA)	Increasing demand for and expectations regarding DOLAs and when there is a need for fenced areas vs informal spaces. Need for a clear and strategic approach to provision standards as well and design and hierarchy.

## 4.2 Exploring Needs

Discussion on what is currently working well, what is not working well and what could be changed resulted in the following key themes:

- A clear hierarchy of provision is required, together with service standards to guide embellishment and asset replacement
- Clear frameworks/ standards are required to guide accessibility for playgrounds and parks and that consider the network and sites holistically
- There may be an opportunity for a standard amenity building design and a framework is required to guide provision in terms of number, location, proximity to playgrounds etc.
- A clear direction is needed on shade provision both for general recreation areas and play spaces. There is a linkage to urban heat mitigation and urban greening strategies in any policy approach which suggests a move towards natural shade strategies as opposed to structures.
- Management of dogs in public places is a key issue that requires a planning framework especially around off-leash areas.
- A land acquisition framework is needed to guide identification, assessment and acquisition of land, including environmental land. The key aspect is to ensure that land is "fit for purpose". This can include size, shape, road frontage and access, slope, flooding and vegetation.
- Mechanisms are needed to guide and manage the standard of facilities provided by developers/ other external providers. This includes addressing issues where the standard provided by the developer is in excess of that provided by council and creating unsustainable expectations and potential inequity between areas.
- There is a gap in provision of outdoor gathering/ performing arts space to accommodate outdoor events in parks.

## 4.3 Planning, Development and Population Impacts

Some planning, development and population issues and challenges need to be considered. These include:

- The aging profile of the community, which will demand a more flexible approach to design and provision of inclusive facilities and greater levels of accessibility and connectivity.
- Managing an expanding asset base commensurate with population growth and consideration of Council's ability to manage and maintain assets into the future.
- Ensuring access by all sectors of the community and acknowledging a one-size-fits-all approach to provision and design is not adequate or sustainable.

- Consistency with the Local Strategic Planning Statement, particularly consideration of future provision in growth areas and catalyst areas.
- Heightened demand resulting from increased tourism and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) visitation to the area.

## 4.4 Future Opportunities, Vision and Direction

Council staff identified a number of key future opportunities for parks, playgrounds and public amenities:

- Enhance relationships with the community and encourage greater levels of community input into design and planning.
- Provide diversity of opportunities and differentiated design (i.e. no more cookie-cutter style approaches) including opportunities for art, nature, creativity, natural water components.
- Enhance community awareness and activation of parks and playgrounds.
- Higher quality facilities, including more natural materials that encourage exploration, creativity and imaginative play.
- An integrated parks network that is connected via active transport and passive recreation opportunities.
- Enhanced accessibility, more inclusive and adaptable facilities and spaces that engage and are relevant to all sectors of the community and cater for all ages and inter-generational use.
- Move towards more contemporary design elements including technology (e.g. plug and play, free wifi etc) and elements that create an 'experience'.
- Community involvement, ownership and partnerships through engaging local community groups, adopt-a-park programs, landcare activities, men's shed programs etc.

Key words that express the 'vision' discussed by Council officers are:

*"...natural...creative...active...inclusive...adaptable...integrated...sustainable"*

## 5. Community Stakeholder Groups

Community stakeholder groups were invited to attend focus group workshops, participate in direct discussions, make submissions, or contribute to the community survey and online discussion. Target stakeholders included:

- Older adults
- People with a disability
- Young people
- Parents and carers
- Schools
- Multi-cultural groups
- Progress Associations
- Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups
- Other community organisations.

A number of key themes emerged through the workshops, discussions and input. These are summarised below:

## 5.1 Park, Playground and Public Amenity Provision

- Lake Macquarie has a number of well-equipped parks and areas of high amenity and provision of regional, larger parks and playgrounds is good.
- There is a perception that the focus of park and playground development is on lake and foreshore areas and more equitable provision is required across the whole LGA
- Deficiencies are evident in smaller residential areas and throughout Charlestown and Glendale
- There is a community desire to preserve existing open space and to provide informal, general open space
- Young people are particularly interested in appealing hang out and general/ kickabout spaces
- Young children are well catered for, with a large number of playgrounds, however there is a perception that engaging opportunities for older children and young people are limited across the LGA
- Strong theme regarding provision of spaces for dog exercise, including provision of off-leash areas, and enforcement of dog-free/ on-leash areas (particularly playgrounds and beaches), and provision of 'clean-up' facilities.

## 5.2 Design and Embellishment

- There is a strong community desire for differentiation between foreshore parks and inland parks
- Desire to ensure parks reflect local character and heritage and communities have access to quality, central parkland
- There is a strong desire for connectivity, including connectivity of the parks network and pathway access to parks
- Shade is considered essential, with agreement that there is a preference for natural shade in the longer term with the use of shade structures required until natural shade develops
- The need to ensure inclusive design of parks and playgrounds and public amenities, and use of accessible equipment and suitable materials. Provision of more accessible playgrounds was consistently expressed
- There is a strong desire to ensure connection with nature and the environment and for park and playground design to incorporate natural areas, sensory, free and imaginary play
- Essential features considered by the community to support park use include clean public amenities, drinking water, shade, fencing, cleared/ open space, nature-friendly equipment
- Interpretive signage and use of technology (e.g. QR codes) to provide interpretive information acknowledging cultural heritage, local history, flora and fauna etc.
- A need for embellishments and activations to support and enhance the use of parks by young people, with a focus on providing appealing and safe spaces.
- Inclusion of appropriate, child-friendly softfall at all playgrounds (i.e. not woodchip)
- Parks need to be able to cater for influxes of visitors to areas for events etc. (e.g. sailing regattas)
- Infrastructure to support commercial uses, markets, multi-purpose events (e.g. lighting, power, technology).

## 5.3 Management

- Maintenance is critical. This includes regular mowing and routine maintenance to ensure barbecues and public amenities are in working order
- There is a perception that parks in the CBD/ lakeside areas are better maintained
- Public amenities need to be clean, well maintained and well equipped (e.g. toilet paper and soap are essential, and change tables where appropriate)



## 5.4 Specific Sites/ Locations

Throughout the consultation, a number of site-specific/ park-specific input was provided, as summarised below:

Location/Area	Community Input/Comments
Northwest catalyst area- Cardiff, Glendale, Cameron Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited general open space in this area besides sports fields or playgrounds</li> </ul>
Sunshine Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider dog off leash area</li> <li>Lack of car parking to support non-local visitation</li> <li>Lack of opportunities for older children</li> </ul>
Redhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolve provision of a 'BMX' facility</li> <li>Community preference is for an informal facility that enables children to design and manipulate</li> <li>Involve local children in design</li> </ul>
Allambee Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity for pathway connecting neighbouring residential units to shops</li> </ul>
Excalibur Parade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity for improvements and connection to the Belmont Development area</li> </ul>
Thomas H Halton Park (Southern End)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use is limited and the area is unappealing due to boat storage.</li> <li>Community preference to remove boats and improve community parkland opportunities</li> </ul>
Rathmines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important that location of proposed hangar does not impact on open space and site amenity</li> </ul>
Charlestown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of general open space</li> </ul>
Nords Wharf to Swansea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential pathway connection</li> </ul>
Martinsville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity for sensory/free play area</li> <li>Need more opportunities for older children (e.g. informal pump/BMX track)</li> </ul>
Catherine Hill Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park behind surf club needs to reflect the informal nature of the area</li> </ul>

## 6. Neighbouring Councils

Discussions were held with staff from:

- Newcastle City Council
- Maitland City Council
- Central Coast Council
- Cessnock City Council
- Port Stephens Council

### 6.1 Cessnock City Council

Hierarchy & Provision Standards	Council's Recreation and Open Space Strategy outlines current provision standards for parks.		
	Park	Provision	Catchment
	Local	0.5ha/1,000 people	500m
	District	0.6ha/1,000 people	5km
	Regional	0.2ha/1,000 people	15km
	<b>TOTAL</b>	1.3ha/1,000 people	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No public amenities standards</li> </ul>		
Current Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54 parks</li> <li>• 46 playgrounds</li> <li>• 3 inclusive, accessible playgrounds:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Veteran's Memorial Park, Aberdare</li> <li>2. Bridges Hill Park, Cessnock</li> <li>3. Maybury Peace Park, Weston</li> </ol> </li> </ul>		
Future park/playground developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal future plans due to budget constraints</li> <li>• Targeting grant funds for implementation of the Masterplan for Chinaman's Hollow/ Maybury Peace Park, Weston</li> <li>• No future developments proposed</li> </ul>		
Future regional parkland/ playgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huntley Urban Release Area development for 21,000 people. Regional parkland proposed in approximately 15 years. Not close to Lake Macquarie.</li> </ul>		
Unmet regional needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth spaces</li> <li>• Sensory play for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Water play</li> </ul>		
Future opportunities/ partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific partnerships identified, however support for regional co-operation to help minimise duplication of opportunities across the greater region.</li> </ul>		

### 6.2 Central Coast Council

Hierarchy & Provision Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local, District, Regional</li> <li>• Additional categories include Destination and Nature Play</li> <li>• No current standards of service – only old standards from previous Councils. A Playground Strategy is currently being prepared.</li> <li>• Catchments for playspaces:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local (400m-800m walk from home)</li> <li>- District (1-2km radius)</li> <li>- Regional (5-19km radius)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Active Lifestyles Strategy to be prepared in 2021 will provide new standards</li> <li>• No public amenities standards</li> </ul>
Current Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 403 hectares of open space lands categorised as park (includes community and Crown Lands)</li> <li>• 263 playspaces</li> </ul>
Existing/ future regional parkland/ playgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional playspace planned for Warnervale Town Centre - Wyong) as detailed in the Warnervale District Contributions Plan- 5.2ha Hilltop Parklands. Includes cycling track, walking/ jogging track, playing fields, proposed netball courts, multiple</li> </ul>

	<p>barbecue facilities, recreation facilities and viewing platform. Parklands to be developed after the release of Stage 6 housing – estimated early 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gosford City Centre (Central Coast Regional Plan 2036) – recently completed and due to open in April 2021. 2.4 ha site includes immersive nature play, bushland ecosystem, wild play and water features, tree planting, picnic areas, public amenities and walkways. Amphitheatre style modelled on traditional indigenous dancing ground.</li> </ul>
<b>Unmet regional needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The region is well serviced in terms of play spaces</li> <li>Need to consider walkability in parks planning – utilising parks not just as destinations but as part of the active transport network</li> </ul>

### 6.3 Newcastle City Council

<b>Hierarchy &amp; Provision Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current hierarchy exists, but no real provision or performance standards, only operational standards for park maintenance etc.</li> <li>2014 Parkland and Recreation Strategy noted:</li> </ul>																
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Park</th> <th>Park Provision</th> <th>Size</th> <th>Playground Provision</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Local</b></td> <td>ideally within 500m of residences</td> <td>0.5-1.5 ha</td> <td>One per 1,500 people</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>District</b></td> <td>one per 15,000 – 25,000 people</td> <td>1.5-10 ha</td> <td>One per 15,000 – 25,000 people</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Regional</b></td> <td>one per 250,000 people</td> <td>10+ ha</td> <td>One per 150,000 people</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Park	Park Provision	Size	Playground Provision	<b>Local</b>	ideally within 500m of residences	0.5-1.5 ha	One per 1,500 people	<b>District</b>	one per 15,000 – 25,000 people	1.5-10 ha	One per 15,000 – 25,000 people	<b>Regional</b>	one per 250,000 people	10+ ha	One per 150,000 people
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently preparing a Social Infrastructure Plan which will look at provision standards.</li> <li>No public public amenities standards – looking at an audit of public amenities which may lead to the development of standards.</li> </ul>																	
<b>Current Supply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>250 parks and reserves ranging in size from 0.1ha (pocket parks) to greater than 10ha (regionally significant parks). Includes 240 local parks, 8 district parks (1.5ha or larger) and 2 regional parks</li> <li>132 parks – 54% are smaller than industry benchmark of 0.5ha for a local park. 58 parks (23%) are 0.2ha or smaller.</li> <li>117 playgrounds (including some at swimming pools)</li> <li>Blackbutt is an existing regional playground</li> </ul>																
<b>Existing regional parks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foreshore Park (11ha)</li> <li>Blackbutt Reserve (170ha bushland reserve)</li> </ul>																
<b>Future regional parkland/ playgrounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Western Corridor Winten Development at Minmi crosses over with Lake Macquarie.</li> <li>Proposed development of Foreshore Park. Includes development of an accessible regional playground.</li> </ul>																
<b>Unmet regional needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lacked of fenced regional playgrounds. NCC does not generally fence playgrounds. Foreshore Park playground will provide this.</li> <li>Fenced dog parks.</li> </ul>																

### 6.4 Maitland City Council

<b>Hierarchy &amp; Provision Standards</b>	New Community Infrastructure Plan provides a hierarchy and classification. The final plan is not yet released and so no endorsed provision framework exists. Draft directions were.		
	<b>Park</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Catchment</b>
	<b>Local</b>	1 local park of minimum 5000m <sup>2</sup> per 1000-2000 residents	Walking distance 400-500m
	<b>District</b>	1 district recreation park of 2 Ha, per 5,000 to 10,000 residents 1 district sport park of a preferred minimum of 10Ha per 10,000 to 15,000 residents	Walking and riding distance 800-15000 m  10-15 minutes drive.
	<b>Regional</b>	City Wide parklands for sport and recreation minimum 20 Ha or multiple co-locations.	City wide access.
	<b>TOTAL</b>	1.21ha/1,000	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No current public amenities standards. An old community facilities strategy contained some standards.</li> <li>Benchmark standards for Public Open Space proposed were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreation Parks 1.2 Ha/1000</li> <li>Sporting Parks 1.5 Ha/ 1000</li> <li>Linear open space and natural areas 2 Ha/1000</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Current Supply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>96Ha community parks</li> <li>73 local play spaces</li> <li>1 district play space</li> <li>1 city wide play space</li> </ul>
<b>Future regional parkland/ playgrounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned regional playspace within the very early planning stages. No detail yet on location or timing.</li> </ul>
<b>Unmet regional needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative regional promotion of the parks network and park and play opportunities across the Hunter.</li> </ul>

## 6.5 Port Stephens Council

Hierarchy & Provision Standards	Park	Provision	Catchment
	<b>Local</b>	0.4ha/1,000 people	500m direct distance, 775m network distance, 10 min walk
	<b>District</b>	0.6ha/1,000 people	10km direct distance, 15.5km network distance, 20 min drive
	<b>Regional</b>	0.25ha/1,000 people	LGA wide 45 min drive
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No public amenities standards</li> </ul>		
<b>Current Supply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently 415ha of recreational land (5.97ha/1,000)</li> <li>122.75ha local parks</li> <li>79.71ha district parks</li> <li>25.5ha regional parks</li> <li>57 playgrounds</li> </ul>		
<b>Future park/playground developments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Play Space Strategy (currently being developed) identified 4 tiers of play spaces with the top tier being of a scale comparable to Speers Point Park.</li> <li>PSC does not have, nor plan to have, a play space of this scale.</li> <li>Do not require additional open space to meet needs until 2036</li> <li>2 regional level parks – Boomerang Park, Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay Foreshore.</li> </ul>		
<b>Unmet regional needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many LGAs now have regionally or potentially regionally significant play spaces e.g. Speers Point, Bridges Hill (Cessnock), Maitland Park, Blackbutt Reserve (New Lambton), Rose Point Park (Singleton) which now provide options for families that were lacking several years ago.</li> <li>Shade is a common request within play spaces which is likely to be common across the Hunter.</li> <li>Fenced off lead areas are also very popular and some Council's are investing considerable amounts of money in recognition of this (see Bakers Brickyard Quarry, Raworth).</li> <li>Positive community feedback is received on play spaces that are co-located with skate parks, pump tracks and bicycle circuits - many parks across the Hunter would benefit from this.</li> <li>Greatest opportunity is to improve spaces in accordance with Everyone Can Play principles</li> </ul>		
<b>Future opportunities/partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council are investigating a policy framework that would enable Council to fund infrastructure projects through sponsorship from corporate organisations. This was successfully implemented in Tamworth (<a href="http://www.destinationtamworth.com.au/Play/Family-Activities/tamworth-regional-playground">http://www.destinationtamworth.com.au/Play/Family-Activities/tamworth-regional-playground</a>).</li> <li>Department of Education are open to exploring shared community facilities.</li> </ul>		

# 7. Other Key Stakeholders

## 7.1 NSW Office of Sport

The Office of Sport and Recreation focus is on active communities. Priority considerations include:

- Provision of spaces that provide opportunities for everyone to be active through physical activity, sport or active recreation.
- Multi-use and shared spaces that provide diversity of options. For example, open space that is linked to indoor/ outdoor sport facilities, pathway connections, fitness trails etc.
- Open space areas that provide for recreation, passive areas, seating, social hang out space
- Inclusion of tactile, nature/ simulated nature and hands-on imagination play opportunities
- Versatile options for youth, such as pump tracks that provide for BMX, scooter and Mountain biking
- Accessibility
- Connected pathways
- Support co-location with sport as this provides options to suit the whole family (e.g. sporting precinct with an adventure playground attached)

## 7.2 NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

Consultation was undertaken with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to identify any regional issues and opportunities. Key outcomes include:

- Minmi Estate/ Blue Gum Hills regional park development within the Newcastle City Council area will service Lake Macquarie residents. NSWNPWS is keen to explore opportunities for a co-management agreement with LMCC and NCC
- Glenrock State Conservation Area is one of the top ten most visited national parks in NSW and provides opportunities for mountain biking.
- The high visitation at Glenrock State Reserve places pressure on key visitation nodes. National Parks see an opportunity to work with LMCC to accommodate “growing pains” resulting from high visitation through improvements/ upgrades such as carpark enhancements at the Yuelarbah precinct/ restricting overflow parking on Burwood Road.
- The Glenrock Trailhead area may present a future opportunity for partnership development of parkland to serve as community parkland/ event space as well as mountain biking trail head and potential mountain biking skills area for children.