

# Smiths Beach Town Plan Community Consultation Part 1: Community Engagement Summary

Monday 27 July, Draft V1.1

Part 1 of 2



## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Consultation Methods .....	3
Barriers to Participation .....	4
Findings from the consultation .....	5
Social Pinpoint Data Analysis .....	5
Most discussed ideas .....	6
Themed Comments .....	11
Participation .....	14
Online Survey .....	15
Data by question .....	15
Junior Survey .....	29
Community Workshops .....	30
Interviews/Submissions .....	32
Key findings .....	32

# Introduction

Conversation Caravan was engaged by the Bass Coast Shire to consult with those that live, work or visit Smiths Beach to understand the needs and aspirations for the future of the township.

Consultation was scheduled from 29 May to 28 June which was then extended until 12 July 2020 to accommodate for delays in reaching community members through postal delays as a result of COVID-19.

This project took place amid COVID-19 Stage 3. Recognising these restrictions, the engagement activities were designed to be completed at home, allowing residents to engage in the project virtually with the use of short videos and images for home participation.

## Consultation Methods

Participation was encouraged through the use of online platforms such as Social Pinpoint and the Shire's corporate website and social media channels. Virtual participation was supported through the use of an online platform Social Pinpoint, allowing participants to engage in the project whilst adhering to current legislation regarding self-isolation and staying at home.

Approximately 254 people participated in this project, given the interest in this project we expect that some people participated across multiple methods, therefore the total number of participants may be lower than the actual number of participants recorded. Participation by method is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 Participation by method**

Method	No.	Level of Participation
<b>Online Survey</b> Participants were not required to answer every question. As such open ended questions saw much less participation than the questions with preselected answers.	128	Participants spent an average of 20 minutes completing each survey.
<b>Social Pinpoint Mapping Activity</b> The three categories of discussion were <i>what do you love</i> , <i>what could be improved</i> and <i>what's your big idea</i> . Comments could be either upvoted or downvoted by other participants.	91	This activity attracted 405 comments across three categories of discussion for Smiths Beach. Across all comments there were a total of 1606 upvotes and 335 downvotes.
<b>Stakeholder Phone Interviews</b> Interviews were conducted primarily on a pre designated set of interview questions and adapted to the interviewee. See Attachment 1 Engagement Summary.	15	Interviews took on average between 30 and 45 minutes each.
<b>Online Community Workshops</b> Two online community workshops were conducted on Thursday 11th of June and Saturday 20th of June 2020. Participants were taken through an online presentation with multiple discussion points within.	17	Each workshop ran for 90 minutes.

<b>Junior Survey and Activity</b> Children and young people were encouraged to provide their feedback through a survey and designing a Surfboard Bookmark.	3	Ages 9 and two 5 year olds.
---	---	-----------------------------

Multiple methods for participation were used:

- Phone interviews with local business and community organisations.
- Two community workshops hosted virtually.
- Survey available online and paper format.
- Mapping exercise using Social Pinpoint for participants to map ideas within the study area.
- Junior survey and colouring in activity.

## Barriers to Participation

An important part of our practice is to reflect upon where and how engagement with our target stakeholders could be improved; to improve both our practice and provide more information about your stakeholders for future engagement programs run by Council.

Participation in these activities was supported through use of Council's online engagement platform Social Pinpoint. To help participants understand the project and the site:

- Conversation Caravan developed a video to enable participants to virtually experience the site.
- Bass Coast Council developed a Context Summary detailing the work done to date in Smiths Beach, as well as planned project and key data on the site.
- Case Studies exploring changes other seaside communities have made to improve and enhance the townships of Venus Bay and Rye.

The project and the opportunities to participate through a communications campaign run through the Bass Coast Council as well as Conversation Caravan. Including the installation of large playful signage across the township. To assist with participation in the project multiple engagement methods were included:

- **Online and paper based surveys-** to allow people without access to the internet to participate in the surveys, with the hard copies being uploaded online once complete.
- **Accepting submissions through Council** - with varying degrees of information from detailed designs to single statement responses.
- **Taking referrals for interviews** - during the course of interviews, as gaps in understanding emerged, additional interviewees were contacted to provide their perspective and knowledge.
- **A virtual tour of the site** – using video imagery uploaded to Social Pinpoint, to increase understanding of the Smiths Beach and surrounds.
- **School connections** – Council used its internal connections with nearby schools to encourage participation in the youth activity.

## Findings from the consultation

In this following section we look at the findings from each engagement method. Raw data from each of the engagement activities is provided within Attachment 2 Raw Data along with the activity.

### Social Pinpoint Data Analysis

The Social Pinpoint mapping activity attracted 405 comments across three categories of discussion for Smiths Beach. The three categories of discussion were *what do you love*, *what could be improved* and *what's your big idea*. As shown in Diagram 1 the category, *what could be improved* attracted the most attention with 63.8% of comments being listed within this category.

Diagram 1 Participation across the categories

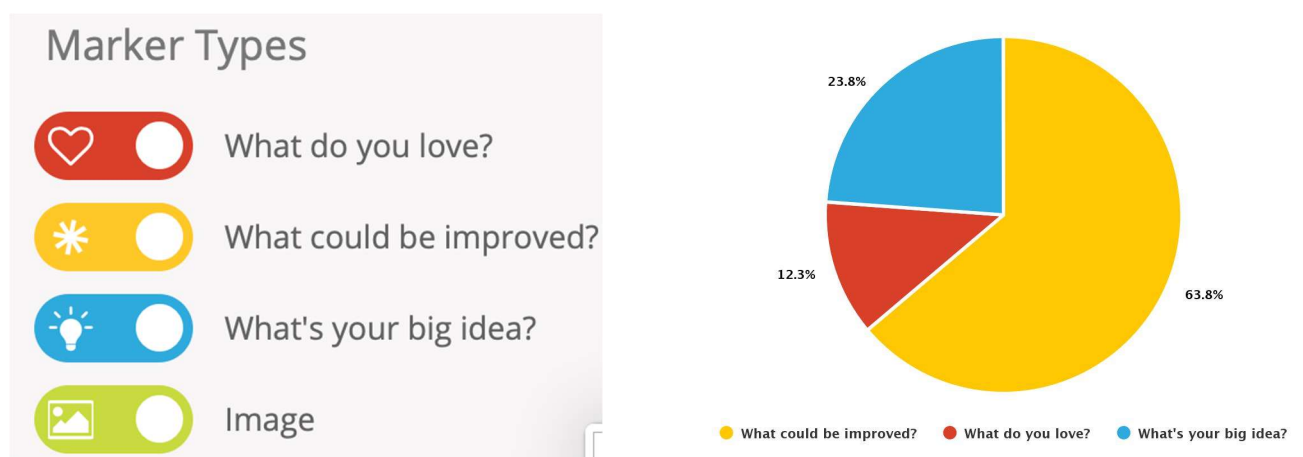
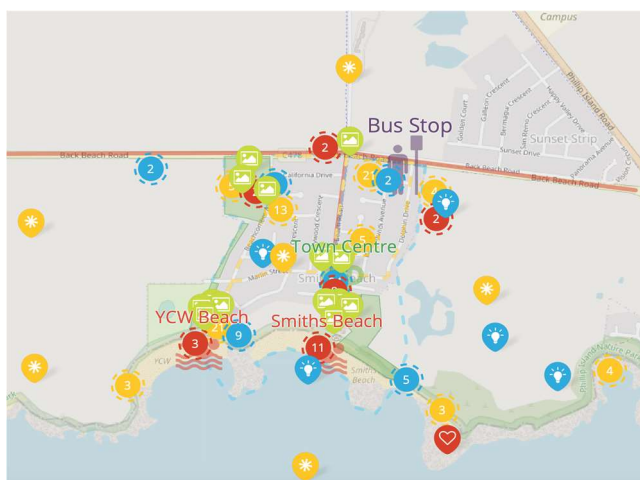


Diagram 2 shows the location of comments as placed on the map. Diagram 3 shows an overall representation whilst diagram 4 shows a heat map, as areas with a higher amount of comments are highlighted with warmer colours. This shows the majority of comments are in relation to the Town Centre, YCW Beach and Smiths Beach.

Diagram 2 Concentration and Location of Feedback



### Most discussed ideas

In addition to adding comments, participants were able to either upvote or downvote comments made by other users as a way of agreeing or disagreeing with ideas presented by fellow community members. These comments provide an understanding of where the most interest, either in favour or against a particular area. Shown below are those comments that obtained the most support or opposition as well as those that were the most controversial between participants. Comments that were controversial are likely candidates for further investigation in further stages of consultation.

Comments have been divided by question category.

### What Could be improved?

Table 2 shows the comments with the greatest number of upvotes, or support for the idea or comment. The ideas with the highest support for improving Smiths Beach were based around preserving the local area both environmentally and ergonomically. Better toilet facilities and bin placement will help to encourage more users to be more mindful of the impact they have when visiting delicate environments.

**Table 2 Improvement ideas with the most upvotes**

Comment	# votes
"More signage regarding local wildlife and what leaving rubbish on the beach means to them. Every summer we are constantly picking up rubbish."	29 Upvotes
"Place a barrier at the back of Mitchell's Reserve to prevent 4WD vehicles driving into the creek area and destroying habitat."	28 Upvotes
"More bins in the summer months."	27 Upvotes
"(Smiths Beach) The toilets are in desperate need of a total upgrade, they are hideous."	27 Upvotes
"Recent changes to the surface of this road (Dolphin Drive) has caused more dust (more dust in houses) and the surface isn't great for driving, walking, cycling, etc."	26 Upvotes

Table 3 shows the comments with the greatest number of downvotes, or a lack of support for the idea or comment. The comments that met the most disagreement was spread across a variety of topics. Many were disapproving of letting dogs off leash while on Smiths beach, with one user stating many dog owners "do not follow the rules".

**Table 3 Improvement ideas with the most downvotes**

Comment	# votes
"Make at least one section of Smiths Beach for off leash dogs."	27 Downvotes.

"(YCW Carpark) The eastern (overflow) car park turn into a seaside park with play equipment, seating tables and BBQ area. The main car park needs sealing, curbing and formal car parking arrangements."	11 Downvotes.
"Toilet facilities at the (Mitchell) reserve would be of great use for young families."	7 Downvotes
"Footpath required on Marlin Street to connect Smiths Beach and Beachcomber Road's."	7 Downvotes.

Table 4 shows the comments that attracted equally high votes in favour and against the idea, making these the most controversial areas of discussion, or those where there is a community divide. The most controversial comments were based around off-leash dog areas, new toilet block development and the possibility of non-permanent food vendors. Off-leash dog areas seem to be a highly debated topic between those who wish to exercise their dog locally and those who believe dogs will have a negative impact on the local environment, which is of high concern to many community members.

**Table 4 Most controversial improvement ideas**

<b>Comment</b>	<b># upvotes</b>	<b># downvotes</b>
"Make at least one section of Smiths Beach for off leash dogs."	14 Upvotes	27 Downvotes.
"Toilet facilities at the reserve (Mitchell) would be of great use for young families."	12 Upvotes	7 Downvotes.
"(Town Centre) Option for temporary food trucks to set up during peak season and offer an array of food."	12 Upvotes	5 Downvotes.

### **What do you Love?**

Table 5 shows the comments with the greatest number of upvotes, or support for the idea or comment. Ideas or comments that were met with lots of agreement from fellow participants were based around the open, small village atmosphere of Smiths Beach, or the desire to see more maintenance to keep that feel. Many agreed that subdivision and high rise buildings were undesirable for the area and would detract from its character.

**Table 5 Most loved ideas with the most upvotes**

<b>Comment</b>	<b># votes</b>
"Green open farm land, no further land/house subdivision!"	34 Upvotes
"Paved area around shops and the single level dwelling, no high rise or apartments!!!"	25 Upvotes



“(Mitchell Reserve) Open park land/ green space, needs fencing off to stop cars/four wheel drives, driving over grass land and digging up/ ruining the grass and leaving trenches!”	23 Upvotes
“Love the atmosphere of Smiths Beach and the simplicity of the area, by commercializing you lose the culture and quintessential essence of the village-like nature of this area.”	23 Upvotes
“(Smiths Beach) Love the new boardwalk and stairs.”	21 Upvotes

Table 6 shows the comments with the greatest number of downvotes, or a lack of support for the idea or comment. Majority of the opposition was around the look and function of the surrounding farmland.

**Table 6 Most loved ideas with the most downvotes**

Comment	# votes
“(Bordering Back Beach Road and Dolphin Drive) I would like to see big farms such as this subdivided into smaller allotments, such a beautiful spot on the island. Why not let more people enjoy living there and turn Smiths beach into a world class estate and show its full potential? There is nothing wrong with progress guys!”	7 Downvotes
“Open rural land surrounding Smiths Beach.”	5 Downvotes
“Green open farm land, no further land/house subdivision!”	3 Downvotes

### **What's your big idea?**

Table 7 shows the comments with the greatest number of upvotes, or support for the idea or comment. The most upvoted comments for “what's your big idea” mostly discussed the implementation of additional walking tracks within Smiths Beach. Other ideas with positive feedback was the addition of SLS patrols at YCS beach and a limit on the height of new buildings constructions.

**Table 7 Big Ideas with the upvotes**

Comment	# votes
“I Absolutely love the idea of the coastal walks Sunderland bay/smith's/pyramid rock would be amazing. Health Community, Happy Community.”	36 Upvotes
“Have YCW beach patrolled to take the pressure off Smiths Beach. Also have Surf Beach patrolled for the same reason. It is a small beach and far too crowded!”	32 Upvotes



"Strict limits on type of building height. No over development. I hope. More parkland walks. Beach parking strategies."	24 Upvotes
"Coastal walking track from Sunderland Bay to Pyramid rock."	22 Upvotes
"Eventually incorporate a coastal circumnavigation track covering the 97km of coast on the Island."	22 Upvotes
"Boardwalk connecting Smiths Beach carpark with YCW carpark."	20 Upvotes

Table 8 shows the comments with the greatest number of downvotes, or a lack of support for the idea or comment. The most downvoted comment in the big idea section was in regards to the possibility of zoning changes for the farmland surrounding Smiths beach. Some comments that disagreed with this notion are listed below:

- "Part of the charm of Smiths Beach and the other villages of the island is that they are constrained from constant sprawl and set in a surround of farms. Please keep it this way!"
- "Hard disagree! There's plenty of development on the other side of the island, ... There has to be allowance for nature and quiet around the townships."
- "Allowing surrounding farmland to become commercial/residential would change the whole character of Smiths Beach. ... Increasing residential areas would turn the village into Melbourne like suburbia w... Leave Smiths for easy laid back rural/seaside living."

**Table 8 Big Ideas with the downvotes**

<b>Comment</b>	<b># votes</b>
"I would like to see the zoning change for big farms which surround smiths beach. Such prime real estate which can't be used for anything else but farming doesn't make much sense. Some entertainment maybe? Accommodation?"	33 Downvotes
"The St Bede's College buildings are vastly underutilized. A short-term summer lease and liquor license could see this headland turned into a thriving tourist attraction. There is plenty of parking on the YCW hillside, and fences surround the entire property. The views alone would attract many visitors in the warmer months. It could be put out for tender as a private venture (such as one of the microbreweries), or become an extension of existing Island vendors (such as the RSL)."	20 Downvotes
"Look into acquiring rural land to install a solar farm and make Smiths a sustainable case study for the Shire."	18 Downvotes
"Surf shop/Smithy's could have a 'hire' shop for floaty noodles and even perhaps a beach toy bank? Saves people going into town to the \$2 shop, buying more plastic and leaving it at the beach. If they have to pay a deposit they are more likely to return things and not leave them on the beach."	14 Downvotes

"Car Parking people have to pay for in the peak period and times of the day. Use the funds to improve Smiths Beach infrastructure."	12 Downvotes
---	--------------

Table 9 shows the comments that attracted equally high votes in favour and against the idea, making these the most controversial areas of discussion, or those where there is a community divide. The most controversial ideas related to changes in car parking rates, creating a town square and a fenced off-leash dog area. These are likely areas that will require further/more detailed consideration when planning for Smiths Beach.

**Table 9 Most Controversial Big Ideas**

Comment	# upvotes	# downvotes
"Car Parking people have to pay for in the peak period and times of the day. Use the funds to improve Smiths Beach infrastructure."	11 Upvotes	12 Downvotes.
"(Opposite General Store) Acquire this empty corner block and develop it as something of a town square or similar to take advantage of its close location to the beach and shop."	11 Upvotes	11 Downvotes.
"(Mitchell Reserve) Create this park into a safe fenced off leash park for dog owners. The least that can be done since dogs are not allowed to run free and stretch their legs at the beach. (even during the off season when there are no beach users.) An area needs to be provided so we don't have to burn fossil fuel to drive all the way to the other side of the Island to exercise our dogs."	12 Upvotes	9 Downvotes.

## Themed Comments

Comments from the map have been organised around eight themes shown in Table 10.

**Table 10 Key themes**

<b>Access and movement</b>	This section includes feedback relating to public transport, walking, driving and cycling.
<b>Built Form</b>	This section includes feedback to the character of the area including the ways buildings are viewed from the street and experienced on the ground.
<b>Environment</b>	This section includes feedback relating to the natural environment, its protection and ongoing sustainability measures.
<b>Governance</b>	This section includes feedback about the governance and management of the space. Including the provision of a fee for service or special charge scheme.
<b>Land Use</b>	This section includes feedback relating to the use of space for residential, commercial mixed use and open space.
<b>Play and celebration</b>	This section includes feedback relating to opportunities to socialise in Smiths Beach, be entertained and entertain others. It also includes feedback relating to the local economy and atmosphere.
<b>Public Realm</b>	This section includes feedback relating to public spaces, open space, streets and laneways. This also includes public infrastructure and facilities.
<b>Services</b>	This section includes feedback regarding access to services in Smiths Beach this largely relates to access to telecommunication.

Where there is a number in brackets (#) this relates to the number of times it was mentioned, number related to a -/+ show where this idea was upvoted or downvoted.

### Access and movement

This section includes feedback relating to public transport, walking, driving and cycling. Overall there were 156 comments related to this theme. Comments related to access and movement:

- A large number of participants expressed a desire for better connected, safe walkways (66). In particular, there was strong support for a walking track connecting Sunderland Bay and Pyramid Rock, and for safe roadside walkways around town.
- Need for more walkways and safe pedestrian crossings to improve access and safety.
- Concerns regarding private land impeding public access and amenity.
- Participants suggested reclaiming small sections of privately owned land to develop a coastal walking track (6).

Road maintenance and safety was another dominant theme:

- Participants raised concerns about road surface (27), dust (19), drainage (30), the need for safe crossings (22), traffic calming (12), and parking improvements (36).
- A number of specific roads and intersections were identified as safety hazards:
  - Smiths Beach Rd and Back Beach Rd (5) - unsafe due to road condition & poor visibility.

- Phillip Island Rd - pedestrian crossing.
- Marlin street - driveway access obscured over summer.
- Beachcomber Ave - vegetation maintenance required / poor visibility.
- Dolphin Drive - potholes.

#### Traffic and parking:

- Responses highlighted a need for improved traffic and parking management during busy periods. Ideas included restrictions, parking fees, clearways, patrols and bus turnarounds (22).

#### **Built Form**

This section includes feedback to the character of the area including the ways buildings are viewed from the street and experienced on the ground. Comments related to the built form:

- Participants expressed their desire to maintain the town's existing seaside character 61 and the need to any development to be sensitive to the current aesthetic
- Concerns were raised about development of farmland (8), +57/-14. overdevelopment (10), increased commercial activity and building heights in the activity centre.
- Protection of native vegetation and habitats was identified as a priority when considering new developments.

#### **Environment**

This section includes feedback relating to the natural environment, its protection and ongoing sustainability measures. Comments related to the environment:

- Planting trees (also as sound proofing from GP noise)
- Noise pollution from the Grand Prix track (7) +11/-3
- Erosion control
- Recycling support - more public bins
- Wildlife protection - hooded plover breeding ground, enforce dog rules to protect wildlife
- Restrict human access to sensitive natural areas - creek, sand dune vegetation, green spaces
- Protect from overdevelopment
- Love for the beach (7).

#### **Governance**

This section includes feedback about the governance and management of the space. Including the provision of a fee for service or special charge scheme.

Comments related to governance:

- Enforcement of local laws - parking, dogs
- Consider paid parking to manage congestions over summer
- Special charge scheme to lower drains and powerlines
- need to ensure master plans are realistic in terms of budget

#### **Land Use**

This section includes feedback relating to the use of space for residential, commercial mixed use and open space. There were 61 comments in supporting, or expressing the importance of the Smiths Beach atmosphere. Enjoyment of open space, ocean views, village character, and green surrounds were emphasised across responses from all categories:

- Prevent sprawl of the town
- Prevent subdivision, generous minimum allotments
- Dog area (controversial)
- Central green space in activity centre
- Support for reclaiming sections of privately owned land for shared public use including parkland and walking tracks.

- “Buy the land on the cliff face to enable a walking track from Woolamai to Berry's beach” (+4)
- Land from St Bede's and farms to create a connected walking track (+6)

### **Play and celebration**

This section includes feedback relating to opportunities to socialise in Smiths Beach, be entertained and entertain others. It also includes feedback relating to the local economy and atmosphere. Comments related to play and celebration:

- Improved safety and enjoyment of beaches - lifesaver patrols at YCW beach (33) and a new lifeguard tower (6)
- maintain atmosphere of Smiths Beach (23)
- improved selection of groceries in town (13)

### **Public Realm**

This section includes feedback relating to public spaces, open space, streets and laneways. This also includes public infrastructure and facilities. Overall there were 51 individual ideas and comments related to the public realm. Comments related to public realm:

- Upgrading the toilet block and shower facilities (7) +86/-7.
- Central focus of the township (creating a hub of activity) increased planting and activity (4) +17.
- Warm showers, additional showers for swimmers and change pad for surfers (separate from toilet block) (5) +31/-8.
- BBQ and picnic facilities (controversial).
- Creating a community focal point for activities and events (purchase of land, conversion of carpark) (4) +17/-13.
- Additional street furniture (bins, seating, drinking fountain) (6) +6/-1.
- Street lighting (controversial) those for felt it would increase safety for walking and those against felt it would interfere with the wildlife and detract from the coastal township amenity.
- Additional viewing platforms that are wheelchair accessible (3) -1.

### **Services**

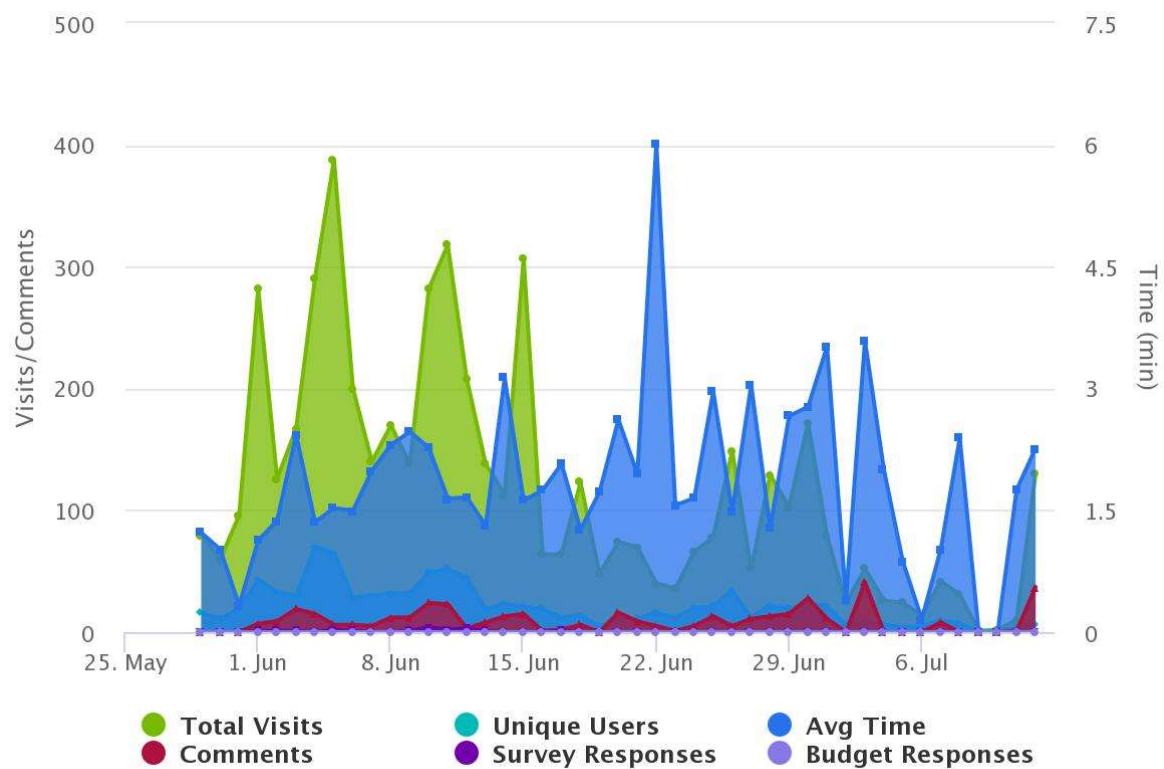
This section includes feedback regarding access to services in Smiths Beach this largely relates to access to telecommunication. This was a smaller category of interest attracting five ideas:

- Putting the electrical wires underground (to improve service) (2) +13.
- Improve phone reception in Smiths Beach (2) +14.

## Participation

As seen in Diagram 3 participation in this activity was constant across the project (shown in Burgundy). While more participation occurred early in the project (shown in Green), the average time people spend in the Mapping Tool increased, this tells us that people were taking the time to read other people's comments. This diagram shows the participation rates across the engagement period of 29 May to July 12th, 2020.

**Diagram 3 Participation in Social Pinpoint**



## Online Survey

The survey was designed to obtain a broad understanding of the Smiths beach communities wishes for their community. The survey was divided into areas of discussion including, access and transport, amenities and structures, services and development, environmental concerns and the atmosphere of the township. The survey incorporated both closed response questions and open ended response questions to give data that was both cumulative and detailed.

On average participants spent 20 minutes completing the survey, showing a higher than average level of interest in the project. Typical time spent on surveys is usually less than 10 minutes, with people voluntarily ending the survey before they answer all questions.

The survey attracted 127 unique respondents from the 29th of May to the 12th of July 2020, two surveys were submitted after this closing date directly to Council.

It is important to note that participants who partook in this survey were not required to answer every question asked. This is particularly relevant to open ended questions. Some questions also asked participants to select multiple responses, meaning that results were quantified with whole numbers rather than percentage of participant selection.

## Data by question

Responses are presented by question.

### What do you value most about the Smiths Beach town and its beaches?

Participants prioritised the Smiths Beach foreshore with 121 selections, the sea and landscape views with 106 selections and the coastal village character with 97 selections. Participants put the least amount of value on the local commercial strip, and the towns proximity to other services, which reflects their high prioritisation of the village character.

Number of requests by prepopulated response:

- Smiths Beach Foreshore - 121
- The Sea and Landscape Views - 106
- The coastal village character - 97
- YCW Beach Foreshore - 80
- The tight-knit community - 42
- Proximity to larger towns with services - 37
- The local commercial strip - 35

### Describe the reason for your response above?

The comments below show some participants reasons for their selections:

- "Magnificent views and indigenous plants should be preserved without toilet blocks and lighting."
- "I love the small, local village feel of Smiths. I particularly like that we are a defined township bordered by green wedges. I would like to see these preserved at all costs."
- "Development should be kept to a minimum to retain the coastal village character, and the foreshores left as natural as can be."
- "Smiths Beach is a special place that promotes quiet relaxation and enjoyment of its natural environment."



- “Picture perfect.”

### **If you could pick one thing to improve about Smiths Beach, what would it be?**

When asked to pick a single thing to improve in Smiths beach, 30% of participants selected ‘Other’ this included maintenance of roads and drainage of the town came up frequently, with requests of sealing the roads for dust prevention being highly requested. Walkways and safety involving traffic were also mentioned by multiple participants.

Of those who selected options available, the two highest priorities were the protection of the coastal and bushland environment, along with improvement of the walkways and pathing in Smiths beach. These two priorities made up 22% and 21% of responses.

Number of requests by prepopulated response:

- Improved protection of coastal or bushland environments - 29
- Improved walkways and pathing - 27
- Improved road access - 6
- Improved leisure amenities (picnic tables, BBQ) - 6
- Improved cycling pathway and facilities - 5
- Improved local toilets - 5
- Improved dedicated green spaces - 4
- Improved Car Parking - 3
- Improved community spaces (plaza, community centre) - 3
- Improved opportunities for fitness (drinking fountain, outdoor equipment, running circuit) - 2

Participants were asked a follow up question; *do you have a specific idea or location from your response above?* The following comments from some participants show in more detail their thoughts on the specific priority action they chose. The most frequently selected categories have been represented.

Improved walkways and pathing:

- “Creating and linking coastal walkways supports and diversifies nature tourism on PI and adds an invaluable asset for local residents.”
- “Coastal path from Sunderland Bay to Gap Rd.”
- “As a rate payer from the area, we deserve footpaths, sealed roads, crossovers, gutters, etc.”
- “No footpath down Dolphin drive have to walk on road trees blocking nature strip.”

Improved Protection of coastal or bushland environment:

- “The foreshore and the areas around the car parks and shops keep that relaxed feeling.”
- “Worried about over development .... chaotic during school holidays ... due to the traffic; The peace and natural environment is what attracted us to the area.”
- “The patches and corridors of native vegetation surrounding the township could be maintained ... to provide continued habitat for indigenous flora and fauna; water, erosion and fire safety management, and an ongoing busy setting for the township.”
- “... the cliff faces leading onto the beach need protection.”

Road access:

- "All the unsealed roads in the Smiths Beach township."
- "Asphalt major roads in the community and complete guttering. I would also like to see a bog type area for all the lovely frogs that currently live in the open gutters."
- "Speed limit should be reduced from round-about to beyond Beachcomber Ave."

Community facilities:

- "The estate has houses on nearly every block now. Tourists enjoy the area all year round. Made roads have to be the main priority."
- "It would look amazing as a park with local plants that bring native birds back to the area."

### **How could your access within the town be improved?**

Participants believed that the three best ways to improve the accessibility of Smiths beach would be the introduction of dedicated bike paths with 54 selections, upgrades to Smiths beach road and beachcomber avenue with 51 selections and seasonal parking restrictions with 48 selections.

Other suggestions were the fourth highest selection with 46 selections. Suggestions included limiting through traffic, fixing drainage and implementing proper footpaths.

Number of requests by prepopulated response:

- Dedicated bike paths for cycling - 54
- Upgrades to Smiths Beach Road and Beachcomber Avenue - 51
- Seasonal parking restrictions (timed, permit) - 48
- Other (please specify) - 46
- Line marking car parking (on street and car parks) - 32
- One way traffic restrictions during peak periods (Summer, Easter and holidays) - 29
- Improved signage in the area - 18
- Provide Additional Car Parking at Mitchell Reserve - 18
- Bike hire in Cowes and Smiths Beach - 10
- Dedicated parking for buses and caravans - 4

Participants were asked a follow up question, *describe the reason for your response above?*

The comments below show some participants reasons for their selections:

- "Traffic is crazy & people park in nature strips etc and don't get fines. Very dangerous."
- "We live here, and the area has such beauty and needs to cater for permanent and holiday residents alike."
- "Take some of the pressure off the foreshore area and streets closer to the beach."
- "Traffic is horrendous on summer holidays. Provide greater traffic flow\control and parking."
- "I would expect from the council to have correct drainage/sanitation and sealed roads in today's age. This is not the case at Smiths Beach."

**What types of transport would you like to see used more in Smiths Beach?**

Walking was the stand out priority in supported transport types for Smiths beach with (51%). Second was Bike riding with (30%) followed by Buses with (10%). The disparity between the top two choices and the remaining options shows just how important the two primary choices are to the Smiths beach community.

Number of requests by prepopulated response:

- Walking - 65
- Bike/riding - 39
- Buses - 13
- Other (Please Specify) - 8
- Car pool - 1

Other suggestions included a path between Smiths Beach and YCW beach along the clifftop, a minibus service during peak periods and E Charge Stations.

### **What would need to be done to encourage this transport use?**

In relation to the prior question, participants felt that the best way to encourage transport use was dedicated bike paths between Cowes and Smiths Beach with 65 selections; Intersection and road work improvements with 52 selections and improved public transport to Smiths Beach during seasonal periods with 43 selections. Interestingly, these responses do not directly correlate to the initial transport type selected.

Number of requests by prepopulated response:

- Dedicated bike paths for cycling from Cowes to Smiths Beach Township - 65
- Intersection improvements and roadworks - 52
- Improved public transport to Smiths Beach Township (during seasonal periods) - 43
- Other (please specify) - 35
- Wider roads for bike riding - 24
- Bike hire in Cowes and Smiths Beach Township - 15
- Improved signage from Cowes and around Phillip Island - 9

Other suggestions included:

- "Continue the bike path walking paths down Cogan Rd to join the existing bike paths at either end and a crossing over the main island road!"
- "Walking track to the Grand prix track and a nature walk along the coast."
- "Bike paths already exist - need to be better publicised."
- "Footpaths and better line marking for parking."
- "Improved footpaths as the path down the hill is old in some areas and can be a trip hazard."
- "Footpaths that are maintained."
- "Creating and linking a series of coastal and beachfront walkways promote greater appreciation of the spectacular coastline, help protect this natural asset and enable/encourage personal exercise ... especially for local residents in the mid-later years."

**Do you have any other ideas to help access to, or the circulation of people, bikes and vehicles in Smiths Beach Township during the peak season or off-peak season?**

Participants had quite a varied approach to this question. Topics covered includes implementation of bike and bus support, shuttle bus incorporation, parking restrictions and parking rates, road upgrades, and safety considerations for pedestrians. Comments seemed to be directed towards a positive notion to include or develop a certain area of discussion, or the opposite, stating an idea or concept that they didn't want to see introduced. Comments below have been divided into positive and negative to give a feel of the sentiment this question provided.

Positive suggestions included:

- “The intersection of Back Beach Rd and Smiths Beach Rd needs significant safety improvements. A pedestrian refuge island (or alternate safety option) at the intersection is required for walkers/cyclists to cross Back Beach Rd safely.”
- “Right of way for cyclists on bike paths on main roads. ... Allowing better continuity for cyclists. See Melbourne city trail for example.”
- “Install pedestrian crossing at busy intersections ... improve pedestrian safety. A pedestrian crossing ... to access Mitchell Reserve Playground ... sightlines are difficult and this poses a safety concern to children.”
- “Wider paths, restricted parking, more parking areas.”
- “Footpaths so people walk on them instead of the roads.”
- “Getting out of Smith's beach in peak time is very dangerous. A roundabout is needed on Phillip Island Rd.”

Negative suggestions Included:

- “No access improvements needed, have never had an issue visiting on busy beach days. More car parking is not the answer!”
- “No, I like the small town feel of Smiths beach and don't want to encourage 'concrete development' in this beautiful area.”
- “Reduce it completely - turn Smiths into a gated community with access only via the two points on main road - passes to residents or renters and by application only to visitors via a payment scheme so \$ can be put back into the area.”
- “Why fix something when it's not broken? It works fine!”
- “There is no need to improve car access or traffic circulation as the beaches are full in high season and can't accommodate even more people. Keeping the roads as they are (some unsealed) is a good way to discourage speeding given the number of pedestrians and children in the area.”

### **What amenities or structures are missing, outdated or needed in Smiths Beach? Why?**

Toilets were the most commonly mentioned facility needed in Smiths Beach with 43 individual mentions. Participants comments on the Smiths Beach Toilets include:

- “Toilet block at the beach is terrible.”
- “The toilet/shower block at Smiths and YCW is a disgrace. Smelly, old and scary.”
- “Toilets at both Smiths & YCW could do with upgrading.”
- “The toilet block is dark and uninviting for people as it looks like it hasn't been cleaned in years.”

Other high priorities were walkways/walking tracks, outdoor spaces, commercial improvements and town maintenance.

- “More outdoor space for kids and families. Mitchell Reserve is great but it's unfortunate that it is so far from the town centre and the beach.”
- “Ramp at Smiths is badly in need of renewal - it's falling apart and even now I would call it unsafe ... an accident is bound to happen soon.”

Participants responded openly to this question, responses were categorised as follows:

- Toilets 43
- Walkways/Walking tracks 12
- Outdoor Spaces 12
- Commercial improvements 11
- Maintenance 10
- Showers 7
- Bins/Rubbish Disposal 6
- Playground 5
- Car Parking 5
- BBQ 5
- Dog Area 4
- Safety 4

### **Are there any amenities or structures that aren't needed at Smiths Beach Township? Why?**

The most common response with 18 mentions was the disinterest in commercialising Smiths beach. This included suggestions such as town squares, additional shops and the like. In the same line of thought, large scale construction, such as high rise housing and a density increase were also cited as things current residents did not want to see happen within Smiths Beach.

BBQ's were also discussed as a feature many did not want to see in the area. Reasons for this included, the encouragement of more tourism and parking congestion, as well as encouraging those guests to stay later into the night.

Participants responded openly to this question, responses were categorised as follows:

- BBQ 13
- Commercialisation 18
- Anything 14
- Large construction 9
- Alcohol Encouragement 4

Some specific participant feedback is listed below:

- “Anything that will encourage hanging around and drinking alcohol. Or mass parking of cars and buses...”
- “BBQ. Having a BBQ will promote after hours noise for residents. Cars regularly camp at the top car park in summer and create noise plus leave rubbish and toilet tissues all through the bushes.”
- “BBQs as this creates more rubbish and people don't look after them and vandalise
- “Bigger shops. What we currently have is perfect.”

- “High rise apartments, units, more than three shops. Smiths Beach has a unique village atmosphere. ... It is an 'eco village'. More buildings (and denser buildings) detracts from the village atmosphere.”
- “I would not like to see any significant building development. ... anything above the 7m overlay or any proliferation of commercial space. I feel the character of the community would be adversely affected.”
- “No. The major danger is over development of Smiths Beach. The beach can barely cope with the current numbers at peak times.”

### **What services or features of the town do you regularly use in Smiths Beach?**

The most regularly used service/feature by participants within Smiths Beach is the Smiths Beach with 122 selections. The next most frequently selected are the local businesses (General Store, Surf Store) with 114 and the beach boardwalk with 96 selections. Other suggestions included a shuttle bus service and postal service at the general store.

Number of requests by prepopulated response:

- Smiths Beach - 122
- Local businesses (General Store, Surf Store) - 114
- Beach boardwalk - 96
- YCW Beach - 91
- Walking tracks - 83
- Playspace in Mitchell Reserve - 35
- Post Office Boxes - 34
- Smiths Beach carpark - 33
- YCW carpark - 19
- Other (Please Specify) - 8
- Picnic area Smiths Beach - 5

### **What goods and services do you need to leave Smiths Beach for?**

By far the most common inclusion in this question's responses was the need to obtain groceries from outside Smiths Beach. Second to groceries was the need for fuel.

Whilst participants noted that there were a lot of services they left Smiths beach for, some felt it important to point out that they don't necessarily want those services within Smiths Beach. Participants stated:

- “...I like leaving Smiths to do these things and don't want them to be a part of our estate.”
- “... we do not mind that we need to leave Smiths Beach for these services as additional services would likely take from the character and small local feel of the township.”
- “... would prefer to do that than have a supermarket at Smiths.”
- “I like to leave Smiths to go and do my shopping. I am very happy with the amount of commercialisation at Smiths and wouldn't want it to be increased.”
- “Almost everything except for milk and mail. This is not a negative.”
- “Groceries, Fuel, Restaurants. However, quite happy to do this as their absence keeps Smiths Beach quieter.”
- “... we are happy to leave the area for these. We would not want these in the 'village'.”

Participants responded openly to this question, responses were categorised as follows:

- Groceries - 87
- Fuel - 22
- Everything - 16
- Dining - 16
- Hardware - 15
- Medical - 13
- Commercial - 9
- Take away - 8

### **Would you like additional local services in Smiths Beach? Why or why not?**

Participants favoured heavily towards no additional services 68% of participants, citing their wish to keep the quiet coastal town atmosphere that they currently have. Of those who voted yes, it is worth noting that some participants requests were either small or only improvements to already existing services. Therefore, the sway towards development is even more heavily weighted than the numbers portray.

Participants who voted no stated:

- "No because it would detract from the coastal village atmosphere ... amenities that are not in Smiths Beach are readily available in Cowes."
- "No - so long as we have the General Store, perhaps staying open later for take away dinner, and Surf Shop that is all we need for a gorgeous, quiet and relaxed beach village."
- "NO happy to travel to these services in Cowes or other areas on the Island."
- "From a service point of view - we have all we need. Any additional services in the township would risk making the place busier/losing existing character."
- "No. Cowes or Woolamai are close enough."
- "A more comprehensive general store that didn't just sell 'fast food'."
- "No more services. Leave it as a village with a general store and surf shop and go to the towns for other things."
- "No. I feel additional services requiring expansion of the current commercial space would change the character of the community for the worse."

Participants who voted yes (tentatively) stated:

- "Yes. Depending on what they are, I don't see an issue with adding to the Smiths Beach offering."
- "Grocery delivery, Taxi service and Public transport."
- "Pop up food vans in the summer months. ... perhaps permits that allowed seasonal food providers would be a way to support the summer boom. Even with this a fish and chip shop would be nice through winter."
- "A restaurant maybe. But nothing else. Don't want Smith Beach to turn into a suburb of Mornington Peninsula."
- "Not sure. Character issues, but perhaps a small supermarket could help."
- "I am happy with the level of services. The only thing I think could be improved in waste collection over the Summer. All bins should be collected every week from December to the end of January."



- “Yes, I’d like to see alternative health services like physio/ massage/ Pilates etc. I wouldn’t want the town centre to become too big - with a community centre or library. I’d like to keep Smiths village small.”
- “Yes, as long as the coastal feel is maintained. A restaurant and a small supermarket.”

Participants who voted yes stated:

- “Yes, a variety of cafes would offer more choice and reduce waiting time during peak holiday times.”
- “Takeaway eatery choices - only one store at the moment.”
- “Yes, more cafes and food options to avoid driving to Cowes for takeaway dinners etc. Possibly a small chemist ... a pub for dinner ... shuttle bus in peak times to and from Cowes day and night services.”
- “Grocery delivery, Taxi service and Public transport.”
- “A local sit-down eatery, (can be limited opening) that caters for residents not just tourists.”
- “The only place to walk ... is actually on the beach or on the road. More walking tracks is my thing.”

### **Should Council prioritize preserving the natural seaside character or providing high-quality infrastructure upgrades to the town?**

Participants were asked to prioritise between the seaside character and infrastructure of Smiths beach by dragging a slider from one extreme to another. Final placement along this slider was recorded numerically, with 0 always prioritising the seaside character and 100 always prioritising infrastructure.

With 127 responses, the average resultant number was 19, showing prioritising the seaside character over development for Smiths Beach.

### **What would detract from the village atmosphere of Smiths Beach?**

Participants felt that commercialisation would be the biggest detracting initiative from Smiths Beach’s atmosphere, with 30% of participants mentioning this within their response. Hand in hand to this, overdevelopment was mentioned at 28% and Dual occupancy residencies at 23%. These three categorical choices show the majority of Smiths Beach desires to keep the small town nature of the area.

The percentages below were calculated by taking the number of mentions a topic had and then dividing it by the total number of responses. In this way, even if a comment discussed multiple topics, they have been quantified without having an influence on another topic.

Categorised responses include:

- Commercialisation 31 - 30%
- Overdevelopment 29 - 28%
- Dual occupancy 24 - 23%
- High rise 21 - 20%
- Parking and cars 14 - 13%
- Formalised roads 12- 11%
- Infrastructure 12 - 11%

- Tourists 8 - 8%
- Signage 3 - 3%
- Noise 2 - 2%
- Boundaries 2 - 2%
- Nothing 2 - 2%
- Parking Metres 1 - 1%

Some comments from participants:

- “More commercialisation, more shops and services.”
- “More commercial development, bigger car park, more traffic, bigger peak season crowds. The beach is over it's physical limit for swimming between the flags ... Permitting over development of housing sites. Losing the neighbouring farmland.”
- “Any expansion of parking or road networks would be detrimental to the existing character.”
- “Development. Development of denser accommodation and residences...e.g.: high-rise units and apartments, units, apartments, town houses.”
- “Too much commercial enterprise. (As above, bike hire and more food and drink options would be just about right.)”
- “Making it more commercial, it's a village, leave it that way.”
- “Overdevelopment of the area and loss of the natural environment and surroundings. Additional infrastructure should be environmentally sensitive and not dominate the natural seaside feel of the estate.”

### **What would strengthen the village atmosphere of Smiths Beach?**

The most common concept mentioned (20) when discussing improvement of Smiths Beach atmosphere were environmentally based actions, such as planting initiatives and ecological design. Second to this was discussion on walkways and riding tracks (18), with participants suggesting a need for more development on the safety and connectedness of Smiths Beach for pedestrians and cyclists. Thirdly were upgrades for the local community (17).

Suggestions here included community gathering spaces and outdoor seating areas. Other suggestions included commercial development (15), greenspaces (13) and restrictions on tourism (9).

Categorized responses include:

- Environmental actions 20 - 20%
- Walking/riding tracks 18 - 18%
- Local community enhancements 17 - 17%
- Commercial developments 15 - 15%
- Greenspaces 13 - 13%
- Tourism Restrictions 9 - 9%
- Maintenance/upgrades 9 - 9%
- Access 8 - 8%
- Infrastructure restrictions 8 - 8%

### **Do you have any environmental concerns for the Smiths Beach Township?**

Of the 100 participants who answered this question, only 14% said they had no environmental concerns about Smiths Beach. The remaining 86% detailed their concerns,

with the most common responses being related to pest animals and off leash pets, inadequate rubbish and pollution control, over commercialisation and construction with the township and protection of local bush areas.

Some participant comments are listed below:

- “Tourists need to respect the environment. Too much litter and people not keeping out of mutton bird colonies.”
- “Worried over development will destroy the environment. We currently have local wildlife always visiting our property. This will stop with over development.”
- “Yes, open drains that hold water which breed mosquitoes and the open drainage outlet across the beach in winter.”
- “Yes, weed growth and some erosion/subsidence in areas of native vegetation.”
- “Yes! We keep building 3 or 4 units on small parcels of land. It needs to stop, reduce the traffic and housing. Most houses are empty except for the summer period. It's crazy.”
- “Cats at loose, domestic animals wandering into dunes, fences affecting kangaroos.”
- “Dogs on beaches. School camps destroying rock pool areas. The rockpool used to be covered with kelp when I was growing up now it is sparse.”
- “Enlarging Smiths in commercial ways could put pressure on the natural environment.”
- “Not enough trees and green areas, too many people using the area in peak times and more recently outside of peak times leading to more traffic, more rubbish.”
- “Over development of house blocks. Limit building height.”

### **What would support the environment or sustainability of Smiths Beach?**

Increasing recycling and restricting cliff access were the top two selections in supporting the environment and sustainability of Smiths Beach. These options were selected 83 and 81 times respectively. Responses for this question were quite evenly distributed, showing that there is a large amount of support for environmental sustainability.

Number of requests by prepopulated response:

- Increased recycling and waste bins in public spaces - 83
- Restricting access to sensitive cliffs through barriers and pathways (YCW Beach and Smiths Beach) - 82
- Increased use of solar power on Council owned facilities - 73
- Becoming a single-use plastic free town - 73
- Increased water recycling on Council owned facilities - 61
- Rain gardens - 42
- Reducing the amount of car parking on the Smiths Beach foreshore - 40
- Other (please specify) - 30

Other suggestions included a more frequent rubbish collection service, more boardwalks and intelligent pathing on sensitive environmental areas around the foreshore and road and gutter improvements to protect against erosion.

### **Are there any cultural or historical elements that should be included or strengthened in Smiths Beach Township?**

Indigenous Culture had the highest representation (23) within participants' comments in regards to Smiths Beach history. Local surf culture and environmental history followed with 14 and 13 mentions respectively. Participants who discussed environmental history motioned towards education as well as active preservation of these resources that are currently under threat.

Categorised responses included:

- Local Surf Culture 14
- Colonial 10
- Indigenous 23
- Environmental 13

Twenty participants were either unsure or had no suggestion.

Some participants comments are listed below:

- "Absolutely, there are major inland and marine sites that would have indigenous significance that are ignored completely at present, And also Mr Smith..."
- "Acknowledgement of and education surrounding local indigenous and First Nations people history."
- "Ensure that the town boundaries are strongly defined and not able to be expanded. Need to preserve the green wedges around our township."
- "Focus on the history of the surf culture."
- "Consideration of improved signage of indigenous or colonial/farming history of the area."
- "It would be good to know about 'Mr Smith' who sold his farm, so the area could be called 'Smiths Beach'...A large rock with a history sign on it? A sculpture with information?"

### **Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for the Smiths Beach Township?**

This was a free text question for participants to add in anything they felt had been missed or not covered within the survey. Participants took the opportunity to reiterate ideas from past sections, express their concerns for the future of Smiths Beach openly, as well as provide a few unique ideas for consideration.

Some other suggestions made by the community are listed here:

- "Put the power lines underground and cover drainage."
- "We need much better NBN speeds, and a better electricity supply."
- Encourage the habitation of native flora and fauna; Encourage homeowners to install water tanks, solar/wind power and other sustainable utilities

Some reiterated comments are listed here:

- "Numerous - fix the roads, more paths, Town square, improved access, more public transport."
- "A walking trail from Sunderland bay to smiths and smiths to Grand Prix track."
- "Open up space near the foreshore for walking and sitting."
- "More conservation and re-vegetation focus and less development focus."

- “More tree planting, less development of houses, units, townhouses. This is a unique area that does not need development in it, or on the farmers' paddocks surrounding Smiths Beach.”
- “Major road intersections to be redesigned to enable safe and ease of access for walking and riding.”

Some words of hope are listed here:

- “My family and I love Smiths Beach as it is. Please don't expand the commercial area or otherwise change the character of the township.”
- “...Will watch with anticipation.”.
- “Please don't develop our small seaside town too much.”

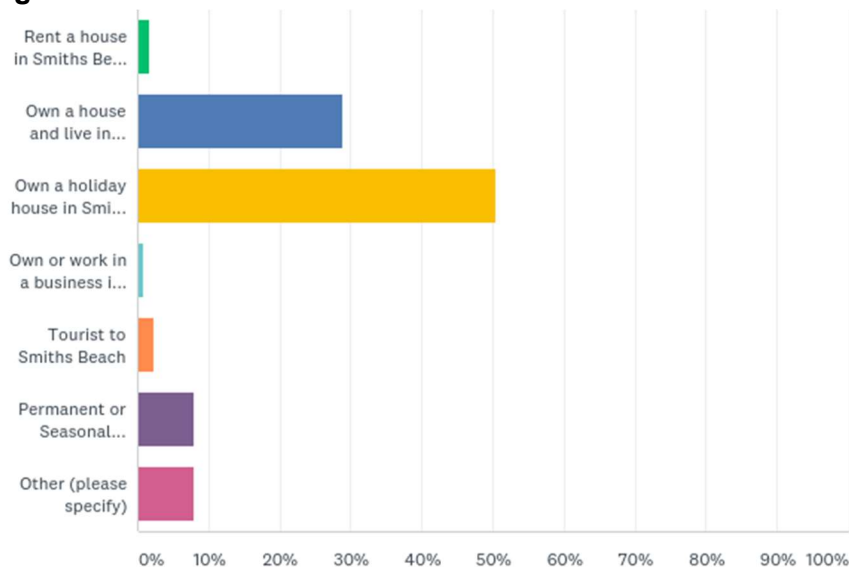
### What is your connection to Smiths Beach?

We asked participants their connection to Smiths Beach to ensure that we spoke with a cross section of the community, the majority of participants for this survey owned a holiday house in Smiths Beach at 65, 51%. The second largest proportion of participants were permanent residents of Smiths Beach at 36, 28%. This lines up with the ratios of permanent and seasonal residents within the community. This is shown in Diagram 4.

Among the other responses, there were multiple residents stating that whilst they didn't live in Smiths beach year round, they did spend more time within the area than just the summer holiday season.

- Own a holiday house in Smiths Beach - 65
- Own a house and live in Smiths Beach - 36
- Permanent or Seasonal Resident of Phillip Island (outside of Smiths Beach) - 10
- Other (please specify) - 10
- Tourist to Smiths Beach - 3
- Rent a house in Smiths Beach - 2
- Own or work in a business in Smiths Beach - 1

**Diagram 4 - Connection to Smiths Beach**



### **How do you normally travel to and within Smiths Beach?**

An overwhelmingly high percentage of participants 84%, use private cars as their mode of transport to Smiths Beach. This highlights the opportunity for adapting and supporting other modes of transport to and from Smiths Beach. Once in Smiths beach, the vast majority of participants, 86%, selected walking as their mode of travel. This correlates with the amount of support for proper walkways and pedestrian safety within Smiths Beach.

Travel to Smiths Beach:

- By private car - 107
- On bike - 2
- On foot - 15
- Other (please specify) - 3

Travel within Smiths Beach:

- By private car - 8
- On bike - 5
- On foot - 110
- Other (please specify) - 4

### **What is your age?**

The largest proportion of participants, 59%, were within the 51 - 74 age bracket, with the next highest, 31%, being between ages 35 - 50. These two age brackets heavily outweighed the other age brackets, showing disparity between the age groups that engaged in the survey.

- 13 - 17 = 1
- 18 - 24 = 1
- 25 - 34 = 7
- 35 - 50 = 40
- 51 - 74 = 75
- 75+ = 3

### **What is your gender?**

The survey attracted an almost equal amount of participation from male and female participants.

- Female - 60
- Male - 63
- Prefer not to say - 4

### **Do you, or someone in your family have a mobility or access requirement?**

Of 127 participants that responded, 17 (13%) either had themselves or had a family connection that has a mobility requirement.

- No - 107
- Prefer not to say - 3
- Yes - 17

## Junior Survey

A junior survey accompanied the main online survey for the Smiths Beach Town Plan see Diagram 5. Three participants answered the survey questions. Their feedback is summarised below:

### What do you enjoy most?

- The beach, and the nature
- Surfing and skating

### How can we make it better, safer or more fun for you?

- The addition of a Skate Park and Kids Play Area
- A place to skate by the Carpark.

### Where do you hang out, how can we improve this?

- Lifesaving on the beach
- Out the front of the shops. If there was a play area and place for skating at the beach Carpark we would hang out there. That would be heaps better.

Four of the six answers here list skating as an answer, perhaps indicating an area to investigate further to actively engage the younger demographic of Smiths Beach.

### Diagram 5 Example of Junior Colouring in Competition and Survey





## Community Workshops

Two online community workshops were conducted and provided an opportunity to drill deeper into community responses, therefore the feedback differed between workshops depending on what was of most interest to participants. Summarised below are responses to key questions asked during the workshop as well as general discussion.

### What do you hope this project resolves or included?

Recognising the community interest and prior involvement in preparing or advocating for the preparation of the Smiths Beach Township Plan participants were asked what they hoped this project resolved or included. Below is a summary of their responses:

- Preserving the natural environmental and 'seaside village' atmosphere.
- Safety of road users, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Road improvements - drainage, parking, dust control, speeding/hooning.
- Services and infrastructure which can support busy summer periods.

The response also provides Council Officers with an understanding of what the community's measures of success are for this project.

### Thoughts on the Case Studies

As part of the process two case studies were explored showing what had been discussed or delivered for Venus Bay and Rye, two coastal townships of a similar size or in a similar situation (seasonal influx, challenges with traffic etc). Below is a summary of participants' reactions or comments to these two case studies.

Participants expressed their support of:

- Maintaining vistas and sightlines to the coast;
- Use of signage, bollards, and public structures to enhance the character of the town;
- High quality construction and the use of natural building materials;
- Focus on pedestrian access and safety;
- Streetscaping featuring native vegetation and other natural elements; and
- Minimising of power lines and signage which impedes views and tree growth.

### What do you believe is the biggest challenge for Smiths beach? What do you think is the biggest opportunity for Smiths Beach?

After a short presentation about the project, the study area and the project's inclusions; participants were asked to consider what the biggest challenge and/or opportunity was for Smiths Beach. Below is a summary of their responses themed by area of focus.

#### Challenges

- Supporting and managing an increased population during summer
- Summer congestion on roads, walkways, nature reserves
- Protecting landscape of significant value and natural habitat for wildlife
- Protecting the environment from human damage and erosion
- Maintaining a "sense of place".

#### Opportunities

- Acquire the vacant block opposite the general store for public use
- Replace or renovate the toilet block.
- Improvements to amenities such as parking and rubbish bins
- Redesign beach car park, picnic area and toilet facilities
- Enhancement of the natural environment.

## **How do we enhance the natural environment and sustainable development of the area?**

A portion of the workshop was spent discussing how to enhance and really balance the natural environment with the desire for improvements to infrastructure and the built environment. Below is a summary of the responses:

- Creating a structure plan for Smiths Beach Area and planning controls that assist with the development of the area.
- Height limits for new developments.
- Street scaping to define road and private property.
- Water sensitive urban design to car parks, soil recharge if possible.
- Subtle signage to enhance character of the area.
- Passive connectivity to other areas - pathway/cycle track, distance markers.
- Signage about local environmental, cultural and historical information.

## **What ideas do you have to improve the balancing influx of visitors?**

A portion of the workshop was spent discussing how to balance the influx of visitors knowing that it's difficult to restrict or limit visitation. Below is a summary of the responses:

- Traffic management was a high priority, including:
  - Use of Blue Line traffic management during all busy periods
  - Use of streetscaping to define parking areas, walkways, protected vegetation
  - Install pathways and road crossings to encourage walking and cycling
  - Placement of additional car parking on outskirts of town, not in activity centres.
- Create a central, safe playspace.
- Increase bin capacity and rubbish removal during busy periods.
- Increased patrols of camping areas and beach.
- Creation of free camping facilities, dumping point and RV area.

## **Final Thoughts**

As part of the workshop participants were invited to share their final thoughts about the project or process. There concerns related to the project being implemented and being kept up to date.

## Interviews/Submissions

Interviews were conducted over the phone with individuals and organisations with either a higher level of involvement in Smiths Beach, unique or specialised interest or view point or a stakeholder that we were unlikely to attract as a part of the wider consultation program.

A total of 15 interviews were conducted, each interview lasted between 30 - 45 minutes and followed a set of standard questions. Interviews were conducted with the following individuals or organisations.

### Local Businesses:

- Cliff Top Boutique Accommodation and Events
- Island Surf Retailer
- Phillip Island Circuit
- Grey Goose Accommodation Provider
- Novatec Designs (local architect)
- St Bedes College
- Smiths Beach General Store (operator)
- Smiths Beach General Store (owner)

### Government bodies and agencies:

- Department of Land Water and Planning (Coastal Planning and Erosion)
- Regional Roads Victoria (Traralgon division)
- Bass Coast Council (Coast and Bushland)

### Other organisations and groups:

- Phillip Island Nature Parks
- Woolamai Beach Surf Lifesaving Club (Club Director)
- Board Riders Association (President)
- YMCA (YCW Camp)
- Smiths Beachcomber Association ((Phil Right and Phil Dressing)

## Key findings

Feedback from the interviews reiterated what many had already expressed through the online survey or online mapping tool, however in most details provided more context/detail to the sentiment.

Feedback is themed below by question.

### What do you believe is the biggest challenge for Smiths Beach?

- Coastal erosion and threat to the dunes. Smiths Beach is quite exposed to the erosive forces of the ocean, its headlands provide some protection.
- Lowering of the beach is an issue happening across the next five years, this will create no beach experience at high tide.
- Confusion over the land ownership for a community facing issues.
- Creating pathways to connect the town to the beach is difficult given the ownership structure.
- Encroachment from private properties onto reserves as well as other owners slashing vegetation to increase lawn area and putting furniture on these areas.
- Transient population of the second householder. To support local businesses and improvements in the area we need a strong population.
- Managing community interest in the access through our property (St Bedes), a lot of the community use our site to access the beach, however we need to be able to abide by Child Safety laws and requirements. Educating Council and community groups that this is private property and the need to manage use and risks.

- Number of people in the area during Summer, Phillip Island needs a better strategy to spread people out across the island. People love Smiths Beach, this love is creating over-crowding and degrading the marine environment.
- Needs a strategy to distribute and spread the population of swimmers across the areas. Put more Lifeguards at the other beaches, provide some more education about some of the other beach experiences.
- Increase in the number of feral animals (cats and rabbits) also increases in environmental damage, interfering with local flora and fauna.
- Not enough spaces on the Island where dogs are allowed off-leash and so people use Smiths Beach and ignore the rules. If Smiths Beach is not allowed, then allowing YCW. People don't want to drive their dog to another beach, they will continue to do this as they know Council cannot patrol this area.
- Narrowness of the roads especially during peak times. People park on both side and you can't move between them freely.
- People would be happy if they could park and have access to proper carparking, spacing hasn't be designated and therefore people park and block the locals and home owners in.
- Home ownership, a large population of tourists putting their bins out on a wrong day, or leaving them out for longer than needed. The problem is they roll onto the road, blow open, and block the road.
- Curb and channel along the roads is needed, Council resurfaced the road with an anti-dust treatment, however it had to be pulled up as it created larger potholes in some streets. "Ramshackle streets, not suitable for the number of users, creates a change in appearance for the entire town." "This would help to raise the standard of the area. "
- "Deciding if it's a hamlet or town?" Not a lot of space for the commercial precinct or area to grow. Sentiment that the area was not thriving in this confused state. "Local community and over-conservative, and see it as residential area rather than a township and would be against these ideas."
- Providing the necessary infrastructure improvements in time to make a positive difference to the area, concern that by the time Council could afford to make these changes that are will have degraded and lost its charm.

## **How can the Bass Coast Shire work with you to help improve the Smiths Beach Township? What assistance does your organisation need to read your vision for Smiths Beach?**

These two questions recognise the large contribution these stakeholders play in both the promotion, management and/or up keep of Smiths Beach. Stakeholders were asked about how Council could start to work with, or continue to work with these group. Given the crossover in responses, these have been categorised based on desired assistance.

### Education and awareness of the management and ownership of Smiths Beach

- Better clarity of what people can and cannot do in the different land areas. Better patrols and increase enforcement of behaviours that are antisocial, or go against the environmental or cultural values of the place.

### Working in partnership more with Council

- Help to finish or attract funding for projects e.g. Work with lifesaving club to finish the Rescue Base Project (solar power and water to the site); Increase number of beach patrols at other beaches to decrease pressure.
- Respect from Council that we are a large provider in the area and contributor and to work in partnership with our group/organisation (Cliff Top, St Bedes, YMCA and General Store owner).
- Run more water safety courses to make people aware of the dangers of the surf. Especially for tourists, create an awareness (of how dangerous it is) program.
- Increased signage and information program (e.g conservation values, safety and beach information).
- Improving weed control in the "creek" it is overgrown with weeds.
- More general maintenance of the area, apart from the rubbish Council doesn't appear to do much in Smiths Beach.
- Assistance with pruning and trimming trees to assist with views from commercial venue "our views are likely to be blocked in 12 months by the tree line and difficult to get any trimming done. The view is our biggest drawcard and it feels like there is no process for recognition of the fact that you can trim trees without damaging or cutting them down."
- Better connection and relationship with the rangers and more assistance from Council to help with planting and weed removal.
- Signage that is multilingual to support tourist access the beach safely.
- Support with managing the relationship with Philip Island Nature Park.

### Making better use of our spaces

- Converting the foreshore parking space into a parkland. To reduce congestion of the beach and dune system; anticipate the lowering of the beach; provide a space for schools lunches and gatherings; and a space for weddings and events.
- Create an overflow carpark to Smiths Beach and create a shuttle bus system to take people to the beach front. At the end of Beachcomber Road (outside of the township are).
- Provide an efficient redevelopment pathway to progress the Mixed-Use zone application to approval stage. Providing work for builders and trades in the town centre.
- Being consulted as part of the redevelopment of the toilet block.

### Let us work with you

- VCAL students always looking for projects and can help out with planting, beach clean ups, a change within the ranger team and policies stopped these.

- Good group of people that can help volunteer in the maintenance and opening up of these pathways to work with Council to build and maintain.
- Planning engagement and collaboration to facilitate outcomes.
- Being seen as an equal partner in helping to deliver the vision for Smiths Beach.

#### Investing in Smiths Beach

- Fund the walking trails and carparking management, it will greatly improve our service ability.
- Connection and improvement of easement - curb and channel, stop allowing parked cars to park on the nature strip.
- Seal the western end of Marlin St, our neighbours have concerns about the amount of dust created by our property during the summer months, it would great if Council could seal this as it's a Council owned rd.
- Program to seal the roads gradually through Smiths Beach.
- Street construction scheme - will raise the standard from a backwater town to a manicured area. In other areas this has worked really (e.g) Wimberland Heights it used to be the lowest-priced housing area and it improved the housing prices.
- Start implementing the YCW beach masterplan especially the repair to the carpark.

#### **Are there any services or facilities needed in Smiths Beach?**

Responses to this question are summarised below:

- Access to a café or night time restaurant or experience (visitors leave the area).
- Creating seasonal carparking e.g. farmers open gates for circuit events for parking to supplement onsite parking of the venue. Can this arrangement be extended to high season days?
- Upgrade the toilet and change room facilities at Smiths Beach, cannot accommodate the number of people using the area.
- Creating a town square or centre within the area (vacant block of land, or reallocating carjacking space).
- Move (create a bus stop) within town for older people to access to reduce their walking distance.
- BBQ area within Smiths Beach with picnic facilities.
- Public access bathroom closer to the shops for access would be ideal.
- Connecting up the trails, pathways and managing the flow and circulation of traffic.
- In comparison to other surf beaches, Smiths Beach is lacking in quality fittings in showers, seatings and landscaping. In comparison to the Surf Coast area, it is lacking for clients and visitors. YCW has no facilities for the public and is essentially a mud park. I would like to see a decent shower block in at Smiths Beach with a BBQ facility.
- Shuttle bus during the peak season from Cowes and from an overflow carpark in the area.
- Additional commercial tenancies in Smiths Beach (e.g. opposite the General Store) expanding on the commercial area.
- Need for more rubbish bins on the corners, Marlin Street and near the Bus Stop lots of rubbish accumulates.
- Bird watching promotion or encouragement, a lot of our clients are bird watchers and come to the area for this.
- Connect the town centre to beach more, more of an entry statement and traffic control point. Between the car park and the beach is an opportunity for placemaking to sit and enjoy the area, connecting street, shops and beach.

### **How can Bass Coast Shire improve access to Smiths Beach Township?**

- Extended the drop off zone, make it all the way along east and west access. Move the drop off zone to the shops. ... "people want to get as close as they can and I have seen so many near misses".
- Bike storage facilities.
- Connecting Smiths Beach to Cowes and other beaches with a walking or bike trail.
- Increase the hardscaping of footpaths within Smiths Beach.
- Better separation of cars and pedestrian in carparks.
- Considering emergency vehicle access during the peak season.
- Relocate the toilet block to the middle of the access points "the ramp while good, creates a bottleneck at the other end of the beach", "people climb up or down the dunes to access the toilet and avoid the ramp."
- Introduce a parking fee for visitors during peak periods.
- Need a zebra crossing at Back Beach Road to cross the road "teachers need to put themselves in danger, by stepping into the road to stop traffic. It doesn't need to be staffed, it could be a flashing light".
- Seasonal variation to the public bus routes, to take in Smiths Beach (Marlin to Beachcomber) to YCW beach then back onto Beachcomber Rd during the Summer months.
- Reduce along Back Beach Road from 80 k/ph to 60 k/ph. Increase the length of the 60kph on Back Beach Road to near Grey Goose Property - to expand the wildlife corridor.
- Creating a pathway across the coastline - Smiths Beach to Pyramid Rock and to Surf Beach to Smiths Beach - to allow people and visitors to connect up.
- Access point from Cliff Top to the beach there is a goat track down to the beach which is no longer usable.