



BELAIR NATIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN AND AMENDMENT COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT

JULY 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) sought community views from 4 February 2021 to 4 May 2021 on the future development of the former Belair National Park Golf Course and Country Club, through a master planning and draft amendment process.

The return of the lease for the Belair Golf Course and Country Club provided the Government an opportunity to reinvigorate the site and reunite it back into the broader Belair National Park, offering new experiences to benefit visitors.

Feedback was sought on the following key features proposed in the master plan and draft amendment:

1. Building more opportunities for nature based tourism experiences in national parks. For example, the inclusion of a licence to a local Mountain Bike hire and skills training business to operate from the old clubhouse in the precinct
2. Removal of the Belair Function Centre following the investigation of numerous unsuccessful management options
3. Sturt Lions Soccer Club proposal to establish a new home ground on up to 10ha of the southern boundary of the precinct
4. Creating more opportunities for people to engage with nature by building a shared use trail and proposing mountain bike flow and jump trails to support a growing interest in this recreational activity
5. New zones proposed in the draft amendment to the Belair National Park Management Plan. This will facilitate greater use and enjoyment of the former Belair Golf Course precinct that support tourist accommodation/development and heritage/recreational use.

Feedback collected from the 3576 submissions in response to the proposals outlined in the master plan has influenced the updated amendment for the Belair National Park Management Plan. The amendment replaces the Golf Course/Caravan Park Zone with a Conservation 3 Zone that protects and enhances native vegetation communities and fauna habitats, manages a firebreak along the southern boundary, permits recreational activities that are inclusive and low impact to the environment and contains visitor facilities such as a Caravan Park.



Government
of South Australia
Department for
Environment and Water

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Following the return of the Belair National Park Golf Course and Country Club precinct in 2018, the department sought feedback from the community through a series of focus groups and an online survey receiving more than 2,200 responses, on the type of activities the community would like to see at the precinct. The feedback highlighted the community's support to maintain and enhance the conservation values of the precinct while also activating opportunities for nature-based recreation.

The department conducted an Expression of Interest (EOI) process in late September 2018 that resulted in proposals for use of parts of the site, including a proposal for a local mountain bike hire and skills training operation and a local community soccer club.

As the scale of the soccer proposal and the future use of the remainder of the precinct required further consideration, the department developed a draft master plan and amendment for the Belair National Park Management Plan. This was done in consultation with the Belair Community Reference Group who were tasked with reviewing and providing feedback on both documents prior to a community consultation that commenced on 4 February 2021.

The draft master plan aimed to reinvigorate and reconnect the precinct into the broader Belair National Park, strengthening its conservation significance while providing social, health and wellbeing benefits to the community. It detailed the use of existing and new infrastructure to create an accessible and inclusive new area of space for the community to be proud of. An amendment to the Belair National Park Management Plan was also proposed in order to facilitate greater use and enjoyment of the former Belair Golf Course precinct. Both the master plan and draft amendment were open for public consultation for three months from 4 February 2021 until 4 May 2021. YourSAy was the key online collection platform and two community drop in sessions held at the Belair National Park enabled community to ask questions about the proposals.



ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

Following the closure of the community consultation for the Belair National Park master plan and amendment process on 4 May 2021, the Department for Environment and Water received 3576 submissions comprising of 2740 YourSAy survey responses, 711 YourSAy discussion board submissions and 125 email submissions.

Feedback from the consultation responds to the following draft master plan and amendment proposals:

1. Removal of the Belair Function Centre following the investigation of numerous unsuccessful management options
2. Building more opportunities for nature based tourism experiences in national parks. The department has supported the short term licence to a local Mountain Bike hire and skills training business to operate from the old clubhouse in the precinct
3. Creating more opportunities for people to engage with nature by building a shared use trail and proposing mountain bike flow and jump trails to support a growing interest in this recreational activity
4. New zones proposed in the draft amendment to the Belair National Park Management Plan. This will facilitate greater use and enjoyment of the former Belair Golf Course precinct that support tourist accommodation/development and heritage/recreational use.

An additional key feature proposed in the draft master plan and amendment was the Sturt Lions Football Club proposal to establish a new home ground on up to 10ha of the southern boundary of the precinct. At the close of consultation, the Minister for Environment and Water made a public statement that the proposal for facilitating soccer pitch developments on the former Golf Course land would not form part of any final documents.

Table 1. provides clear themes collected from the community through the consultation process and describes the actions DEW has taken or has proposed for further consideration.

Table 1: Community Consultation Feedback summarised from the Belair master plan and amendment process

We asked	You said	Actions
<p>What are the most important features proposed in the master plan for the precinct?</p>	<p>-Over 60% of responses (collected from surveys, the YourSAy discussion board or individual submissions) reinforced that National Parks is for the preservation and conservation of nature and biodiversity. Feedback also suggested that modifying the landscape, to accommodate activities that contradict this primary role, will not be supported by the majority of the community.</p> <p>The options in the survey that received the most support from community were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating more opportunities for people to engage with nature by building a shared use trail and proposing mountain bike flow and jump trails to support a growing interest in this recreational activity. 2. Building more opportunities for nature based tourism experiences in national parks. For example the inclusion of a licence to a local Mountain Bike hire and skills training business to operate from the old clubhouse in the precinct. 	<p>-Replace the Golf Course/Caravan Park Zone with a Conservation 3 Zone that protects and enhances native vegetation communities and fauna habitats, manages a firebreak along the southern boundary, permits recreational activities that are inclusive and low impact to the environment and contains visitor facilities such as a Caravan Park.</p> <p>-Open up an accessible shared use trail, the Birdie Loop, for the use of bikes, walking and horse riding around the perimeter of the former Belair Golf Course precinct.</p> <p>-Licence a local business to operate a café and mountain bike hire and skills training business from the clubhouse on the precinct.</p> <p>-Permit bike flow and jump trails in appropriate locations that don't compromise native vegetation and fauna habitats.</p>

	<p>3. Increasing outdoor education and community participation opportunities- engaging the broader community in authentic learning experiences.</p> <p>- There was support for low impact recreational activities such as disc golf, continuation of horse-riding along shared use trails, and utilisation of the space for broader community events and use that won't compromise the management objectives of the Belair National Park Management Plan.</p> <p>-Eco accommodation was supported through existing establishments like the Belair Caravan Park.</p>	
<p>Feedback on a proposal from Sturt Lions Football Club (SLFC) to utilise up to 10ha of the former Belair National Park Golf Course precinct to support a new home ground comprising of pitches and a clubroom</p>	<p>-The majority of people responding to the online survey, providing feedback via written submission, attending drop in sessions, and signing community petitions opposed the progression of this proposal (85%).</p> <p>-Feedback focussed around the SLFC proposals scale, noise/light pollution, exclusivity to the general public, tree removal and loss of native habitat, traffic congestion and car parking. Many comments also suggested that unlike many of the other proposals, the soccer proposals offered minimal to no engagement with nature.</p>	<p>-At the close of consultation, the Minister made a public statement that the proposal for facilitating a soccer pitch development on the former Golf Course land would not form part of any final documents.</p>

<p>To what extent do you support Principle 1: Protection and restoration of the natural environment and heritage in the draft Belair master plan?</p>	<p>-An overwhelming majority of responses (88%) support to somewhat support this principle and see this as a vital value that should govern the precinct.</p> <p>-A very strong message received across all methods of consultation noted that the primary role of national parks is the preservation and conservation of nature and biodiversity and hence should be the focus for park management planning before recreational pursuits are considered.</p>	<p>- Replace the Golf Course/Caravan Park Zone with a Conservation 3 Zone that protects and enhances native vegetation communities and fauna habitats, manages a firebreak along the southern boundary, permits recreational activities that are inclusive and low impact to the environment and contains visitor facilities such as a Caravan Park.</p>
<p>To what extent do you support Principle 2: Respect Cultural Heritage in the draft Belair master plan?</p>	<p>-74% of responses support Principle 2 and have requested further action to be taken to demonstrate this.</p> <p>-The majority of responses that support this principle indicate a preference to promote genuine reconciliation between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people through tree plantings, cultural awareness through stories, Indigenous food trails, rangers and employment.</p>	<p>-At present the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region is focussing on progressing employment opportunities for First Nations and inclusion of First Nations knowledge and stories on interpretive signage in parks and during events. Future partnerships and engagements within the Belair National Park precinct can be progressed through the Warbli Kumunka group, supported by the region.</p>
<p>To what extent do you support Principle 3: Promote Community Health and Wellbeing in the draft Belair master plan?</p>	<p>-Although 80% of responses support this principle, there were reservations expressed that this principle would enable high impact development to occur in the precinct, if they had a health outcome connected to it.</p> <p>-A strong message within the 80% of responses that support this principle was that low impact activities such as bike riding, bush walking, nature play spaces and educational</p>	<p>-Open up a shared use trail, the Birdie Loop, for the use of bikes, walking and horse-riding around the perimeter of the former Belair Golf Course precinct.</p> <p>-Licence a local business to operate a café and mountain bike hire and skills training business from the clubhouse on the precinct.</p> <p>-Partner with Disc Golf to establish a course that is accessible and inclusive on the Belair precinct.</p>

	<p>opportunities utilising trails are the best match within a national park setting. The health and well-being of the park should be the most important focus, following community use for their own benefit.</p>	<p>-Remove the SLFC proposal and the opportunity for high environmental impact recreational activities, such as those requiring large purpose built facilities, to be permitted in the zone.</p>
<p>How supportive are you of commercial activities on this site, assuming that they are compatible with the park environment.</p>	<p>-There was an even distribution of responses given to this question with 25% very supportive, 24% supportive, 17% unsure, 13% unsupportive and 21% very unsupportive.</p> <p>-The majority of feedback that supported commercial activity (49%) to some degree did so under the pretence that it would enhance nature-based experiences at the Belair National Park and meet the following community expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> That any public benefit and enjoyment must be consistent with, and not undertaken to the detriment, of the conservation of wildlife in a natural environment. Community use is not excluded. Keeping the precinct as accessible as possible for everyone to use was a strong theme. Construction of built permanent fixtures that change the landscape is not appropriate in areas with conservation significance. Meaningful community consultation has been undertaken. <p>There is wide community support for the proposal.</p>	<p>-The Conservation 3 Zone provides scope for the continuation of the Caravan Park as well as opportunities to improve visitor facilities and trails. Within the zone are a number of assets which have heritage status, including the clubhouse, which provides an opportunity to be utilised by the private sector who can offer a nature-based visitor service experience compatible with the objectives of the Belair National Park Management Plan. This is currently being utilised by a local mountain bike hire and skills training business with an attached café.</p>

	<p>-23% of responses made reference to supporting eco-style accommodation through existing establishments like the Belair Caravan Park.</p> <p>-There was support for a mountain bike hire and skills training business with the attached café and utilisation of the space for broader community events and use that don't compromise the environmental significance of the area.</p>	
<p>An amendment to several zones in the precinct is proposed to transition this piece of land to future uses that support 1) tourist accommodation/development (area of 78090.1 m2) (2) heritage/recreational use (area of 393,814.59 m2). Do you agree with the proposed amendments?</p>	<p>-An equal proportion of people agreed and disagreed to this amendment option proposed.</p> <p>-In light of <u>not supporting</u> the rezoning to anything but a conservation zone, the following statements have been taken from a number of submissions that are reflective of a broader community sentiment:</p> <p>-“There is valuable remnant and semi-remnant vegetation and hundreds of trees that are centuries old that have high and very high biodiversity and habitat value. This destruction should be unthinkable in the modern management of a national park.”</p> <p>-“activities such as oval and team sports are incompatible with native vegetation restoration including restoration of native vegetation on old fairways, and low green</p>	<p>-Replace the Golf Course/Caravan Park Zone with a Conservation 3 Zone in the Belair National Park Management Plan that protects and enhances native vegetation communities and fauna habitats whilst permitting activities that are inclusive and low impact to the environment.</p> <p><u>The zone is described in the Belair Management Plan as per below:</u></p> <p>This zone is positioned along the south west boundary of the Belair National Park, adjacent to Upper Sturt Road. It contains visitor facilities such as a caravan park which is privately managed through a lease under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972</i>. The zone provides scope for the continuation of this enterprise as well as opportunities to improve visitor facilities and trails. Within the zone are a number of assets which have heritage values, including the clubhouse, which provides an opportunity to be utilised by the private sector who can offer new visitor experiences compatible with the objectives of the Belair National Park Management Plan.</p>

	<p>native grass and herbaceous species for firefighting access tracks in strategic locations.”</p> <p>-“Opportunities to connect with nature and learn about nature, which is an important value of a national park is more likely to be successful if zoned as conservation and not recreation/heritage.”</p> <p>In light of <u>supporting</u> the rezoning to enable a mix of heritage/recreation and tourist accommodation/development pursuits to take place the following statements have been taken from a number of submissions that are reflective of a broader community sentiment:</p> <p>-“Approve zones for low impact recreational activity, not large scale commercial activity, exclusive to a small percentage of the community.”</p> <p>-“The historical use of the land as a golf course should permit other low impact recreational activities that can coincide with conservation.”</p> <p>-“Recreation and heritage is an important aspect of the Belair National Park’s history and this, if done sensitively, is an appropriate place for it to continue.”</p>	<p>Low environmental impact recreational activities are an important and appropriate activity that can co-exist within a Conservation 3 Zone. The zone contains an accessible shared use trail that loops around the perimeter, which can be used for walking, cycling or horse-riding. High environmental impact recreational activities, such as those requiring large purpose built facilities, are not permitted in the zone.</p> <p>There is a lot of variance in condition within and between existing vegetation patches across the former golf course area. Habitat restoration and revegetation will be focused on the former fairways to complement the existing vegetation.</p> <p>The zone will also be managed as a bushfire buffer zone according to the Hills Face Zone Mount Lofty Ranges Fire Management Plan. This is an area where the Department for Environment and Water manage fuel loads to reduce the speed and intensity of bushfires, in order to reduce bushfire risk to nearby assets.</p> <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that native vegetation communities and fauna habitats within the Conservation 3 Zone are protected and enhanced. • Encourage the shared use trails, by promoting activities such as bushwalking, cycling and horse-riding. • Permit the following recreation activities within the Conservation 3 Zone at appropriate locations without compromising native vegetation and fauna habitats:
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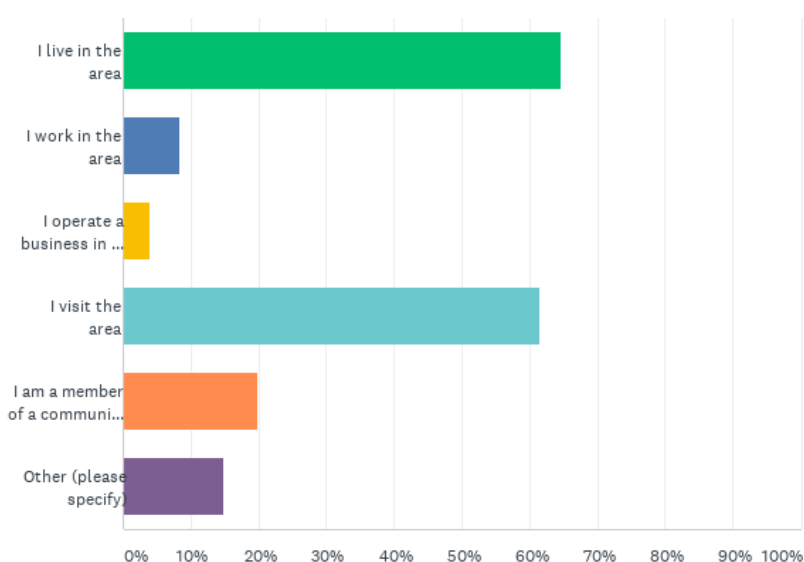
	<p>"The zone is in an accessible location within the Belair National Park, so this should be reflected in the activities that can take place, including low impact recreation that is inclusive for all ages and abilities."</p> <p>- "It is good to see it used to increase access to outdoor activity and sport."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disc Golf - dog walking (restrained on a lead) - festivals and community events - bike flow and jump tracks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibit high environmental impact recreational use within the zone. • Remove the Belair Function Centre as an obsolete asset inconsistent with the purpose of the Conservation 3 Zone • Recognise the continued operation of the caravan park which may include future proposals to upgrade facilities using ecologically sustainable principles that safeguard the park's objectives. • Support private sector interest in utilising existing facilities, such as the old clubhouse, to deliver ecologically sustainable services to park visitors. • Manage a firebreak by ensuring that fuel along the southern boundary of the zone and adjacent internal tracks are managed according to the Hills Face Zone Mount Lofty Ranges Fire Management Plan.
<p>It is proposed that the Belair Function Centre is removed and appropriate re-use of the site is an option for further investigation.</p>	<p>-The proposal to remove the former Belair Country Club has been mixed. Much of the feedback questions the inability to find a suitable user of the asset and preference for the building to be reused rather than demolished.</p> <p>-However there is also acceptance that it is old infrastructure, in need of repair, and that the space could be utilised to further conservation efforts of the park.</p>	<p>Remove the Belair Function Centre as an obsolete asset inconsistent with the purpose of the Conservation 3 Zone. To date, the department have investigated a number of management options for the future operations of the function centre. The EOI process focused on finding management for the centre, however no suitable proposals were identified, which would warrant Government investing in an asset in such poor condition which is unlikely to yield a financial return.</p>

	<p>-Strong support for it to be utilised as a learning/education centre for community and school use.</p>	
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SNAPSHOT OF QUANTITATIVE FEEDBACK COLLECTED FROM YOURSAY

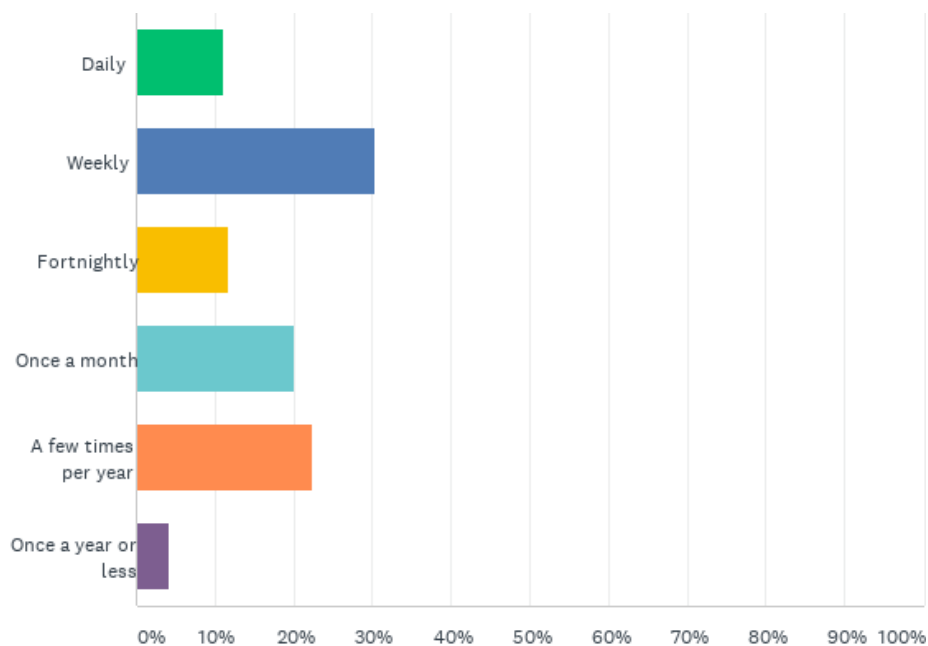
The data below represents responses collected on YourSAY during community consultation for the draft Belair Master Plan and amendment from 4 February 2021 to 4 May 2021.

What is your interest in the Belair master plan? (Please select all that apply)



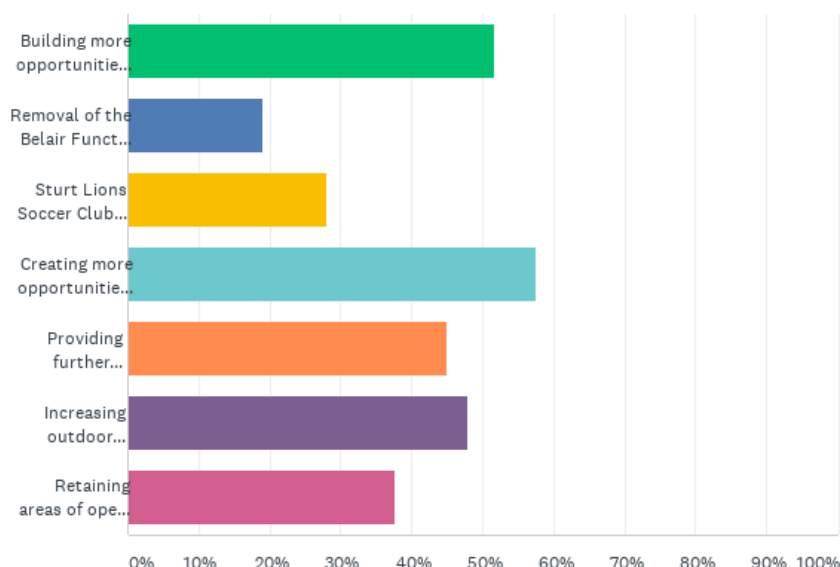
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I live in the area	64.58%	1,754
I work in the area	8.43%	229
I operate a business in the area	4.01%	109
I visit the area	61.52%	1,671
I am a member of a community organisation in the area	19.88%	540
Other (please specify)	14.76%	401
Total Respondents: 2,716		

How often do you visit Belair National Park?



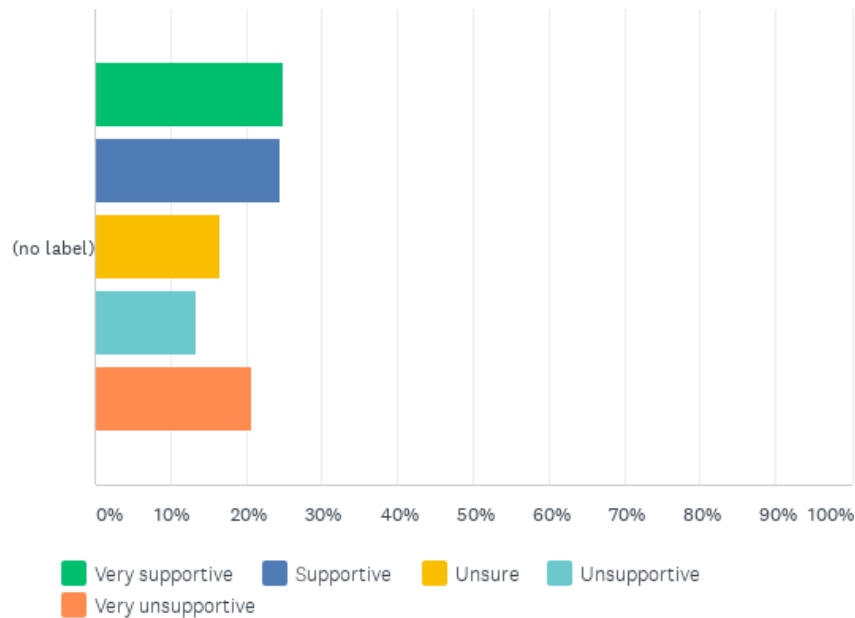
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	11.16%	303
Weekly	30.35%	824
Fortnightly	11.79%	320
Once a month	20.18%	548
A few times per year	22.43%	609
Once a year or less	4.09%	111
TOTAL		2,715

Please tick the three most important features proposed in the Belair master plan that you believe should be implemented into the future



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Building more opportunities for nature based tourism experiences in national parks. For example the inclusion of a lease to a local Mountain Bike hire and skills training business to operate from the old clubhouse in the precinct.	51.59% 1,346
Removal of the Belair Function Centre following the investigation of numerous unsuccessful management options.	19.05% 497
Sturt Lions Soccer Club proposal to establish a new home ground on up to 10ha of the southern boundary of the precinct.	27.94% 729
Creating more opportunities for people to engage with nature by building a shared use trail and proposing mountain bike flow and jump trails to support a growing interest in this recreational activity.	57.45% 1,499
Providing further opportunities for people living with physical disabilities to have access to nature through the use of Mountain Trikes that would be available for loan to use throughout the Belair National Park, including the new Birdie Loop Trail within the precinct.	44.96% 1,173
Increasing outdoor education and community participation opportunities- engaging the broader community in authentic learning experiences.	47.87% 1,249
Retaining areas of open space, for formal and informal recreation. A large oval is available for use, suitable for sports training and also a space that could be utilized by third parties for events or health/fitness business enterprises.	37.56% 980
Total Respondents: 2,609	

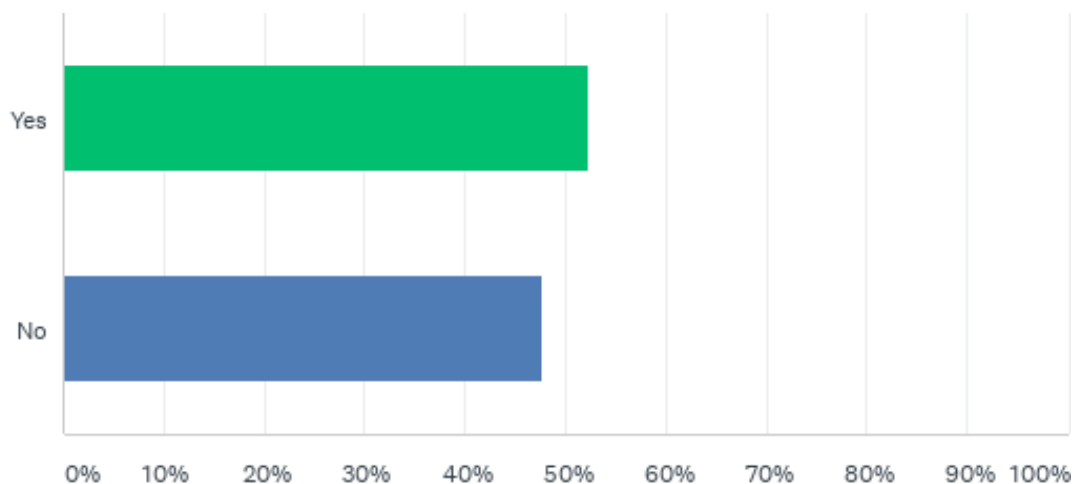
How supportive are you of commercial activities on this site, assuming that they are compatible with the park environment?



	VERY SUPPORTIVE	SUPPORTIVE	UNSURE	UNSUPPORTIVE	VERY UNSUPPORTIVE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	24.86% 673	24.46% 662	16.51% 447	13.37% 362	20.80% 563	2,707	2.81

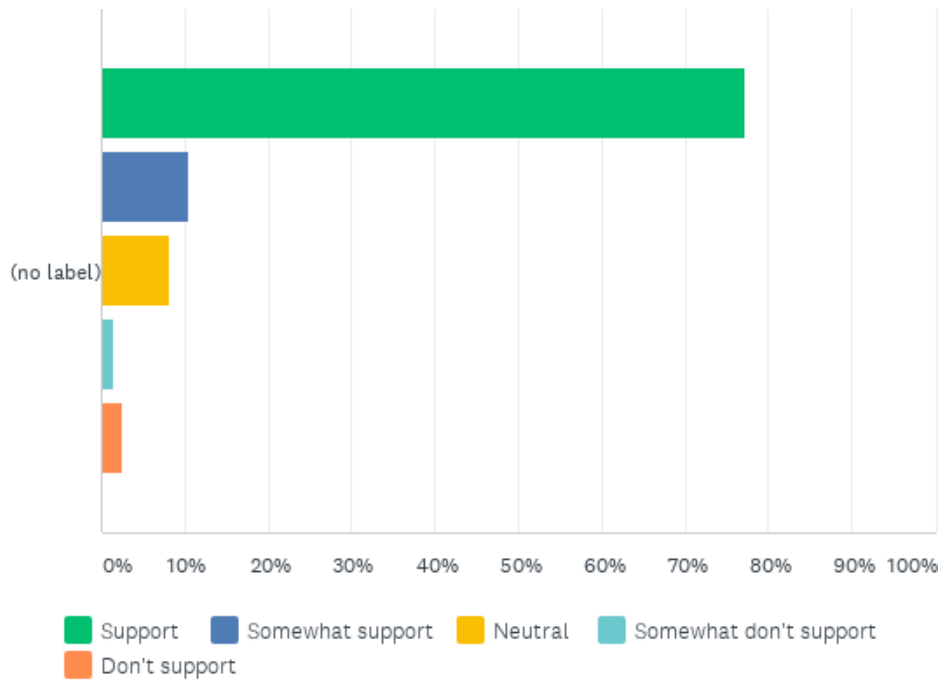
An amendment to several zones in the precinct is proposed to transition this piece of land to future uses that supports tourist accommodation/development (area of 78090.1 m²) heritage/recreational use (area of 393,814.59 m²).

Do you agree with the proposed amendments?



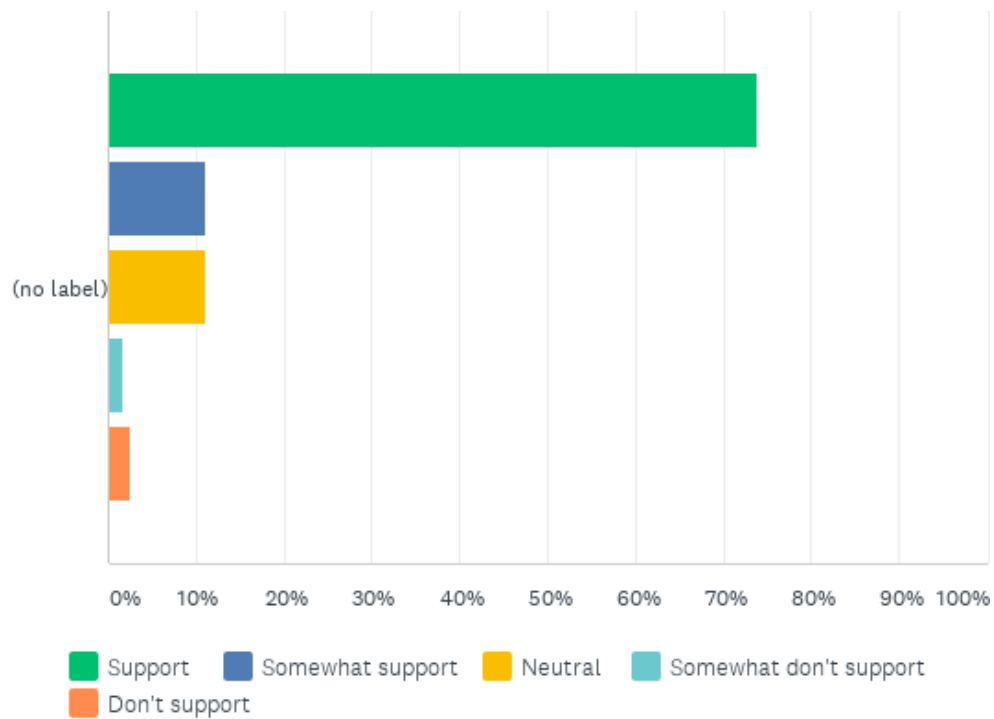
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	52.35%	1,380
No	47.65%	1,256
TOTAL		2,636

To what extent do you support Principle 1: Protection and restoration of the natural environment and heritage in the draft Belair master plan?



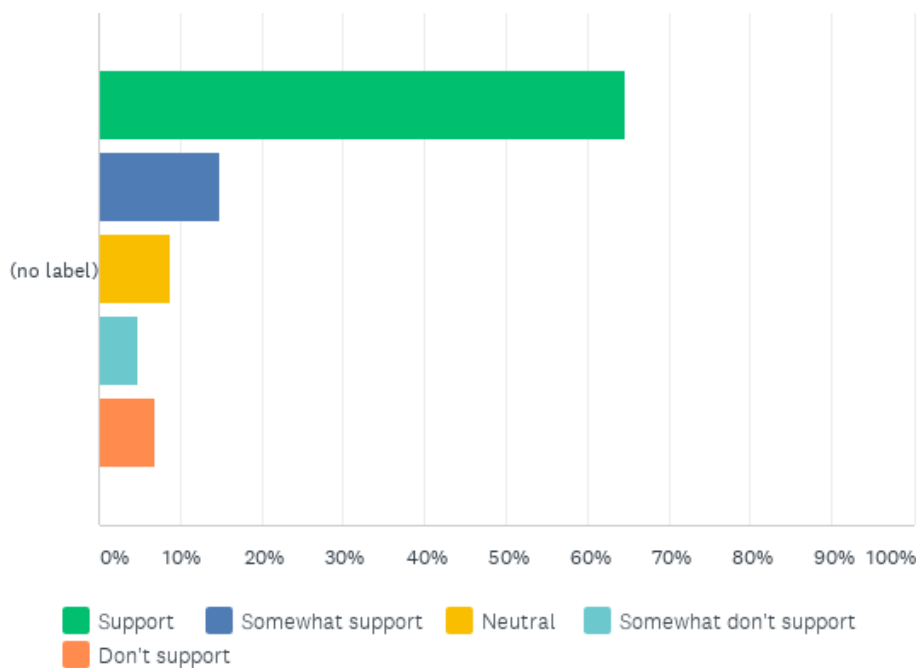
	SUPPORT	SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DON'T SUPPORT	DON'T SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	77.26% 2,086	10.56% 285	8.22% 222	1.52% 41	2.44% 66	2,700	1.41

To what extent do you support Principle 2: Respect Cultural Heritage in the draft Belair master plan?



	SUPPORT	SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DON'T SUPPORT	DON'T SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	73.91% 1,989	11.00% 296	11.04% 297	1.60% 43	2.45% 66	2,691	1.48

To what extent do you support Principle 3: Promote Community Health and Wellbeing in the draft Belair master plan?



	SUPPORT	SOMEWHAT SUPPORT	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DON'T SUPPORT	DON'T SUPPORT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	64.74% 1,728	14.95% 399	8.69% 232	4.80% 128	6.82% 182	2,669	1.74

NEXT STEPS

As a result of the feedback received, an amendment has been included in the Belair National Park Management Plan that replaces the Golf Course/Caravan Park Zone with a Conservation 3 Zone that will protect and enhance native vegetation communities and fauna habitats, manage a firebreak along the southern boundary, and permit recreational activities that are inclusive and low impact to the environment.

There were a number of constructive submissions and comments received (many of which were outside the scope of the proposed amendments) which may be further considered by the Department for Environment and Water and potentially used to inform any future operational changes that can be made without legislative amendment.