



National Capital Authority

LISTENING REPORT

**Community Engagement on Commonwealth Park
Concept Vision 2025**

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INTRODUCTION

In April 2025, the National Capital Authority (NCA) invited the Australian community to shape the future of Commonwealth Park and released a new concept vision for its revitalisation.

The Commonwealth Park Concept Vision 2025 (the Concept Vision) sets out options and opportunities for the revitalisation of Commonwealth Park over the coming decades. It seeks to preserve the integrity and current uses of Commonwealth Park, while looking at ways the Park can evolve over time to meet the future needs of Canberra as the National Capital.

In developing the Concept Vision, issues considered and balanced included the historic legacy of Dame Sylvia Crowe's master plan; the impact of major events such as Floriade and music concerts at Stage 88; the role of the park as a major landscape feature and public resource in the Central National Area; and the importance of connectivity, accessibility and sustainability.

A high level of responses were received from members of the skating community, demonstrating a passion for skatepark/stakeboarding facilities within Commonwealth Park.

The Concept Vision was released for community feedback from 10 April to 20 June 2025. This Listening Report summarises feedback received during this engagement period, with the aim of providing an overview of the key insights, concerns and ideas from the community. Some feedback was not included (eg the Archbishops residence) as it is out of context of the Concept Vision area.

The NCA acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of Canberra and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT, pays respect to their Elders, past and present, and recognises their long-standing connection to the land and the region.

HOW WE ENGAGED

Engagement for the Concept Vision included a range of communication and engagement activities designed to reach a diverse and broad section of the community.

This included:

- advertising via media channels
- emails to stakeholders
- pop-up information sessions at Lake Burley Griffin and in Civic
- postcards with a QR code linking to the NCA website information were available at public engagement sessions, the National Capital Exhibition and Civil Pool
- a community information session
- social media posts
- information on the NCA website
- media release and interviews.

Stakeholder meetings were offered to a variety of stakeholder groups identified as having an interest in the Concept Vision.

Feedback was welcomed via an online survey, at face-to-face engagements and in writing.

WHO WE ENGAGED

The Commonwealth Park Concept Vision webpage attracted a total of **5,772 views**.

We spoke to approximately **130 people** across **5 pop-up sessions**, **32 people** registered for the community information session and two stakeholder group meetings were held.

We received feedback through **384 survey responses** and **134 written responses** from individuals or organisations.

Community Engagement Snapshot



Webpage views

5,772



Digital version views

620



Survey responses

384



Written feedback

134



Community pop-ups attendance

130



Community briefing registration

32

Commitment to Engagement



Stakeholders + stakeholder meetings

We emailed 97 stakeholders - a mix of individuals and organisations - and invited them to attend 1 of 4 stakeholder meetings. Based on responses 2 meetings were held.

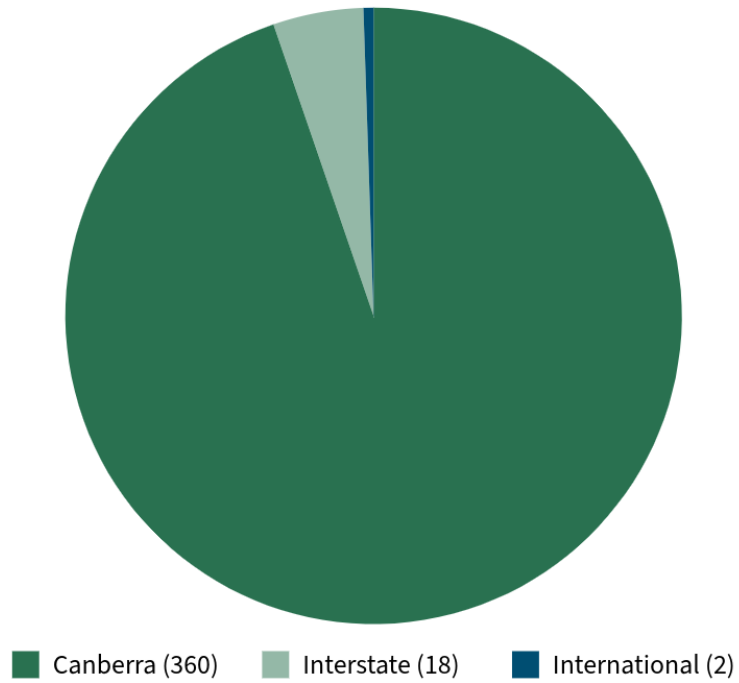


Social media

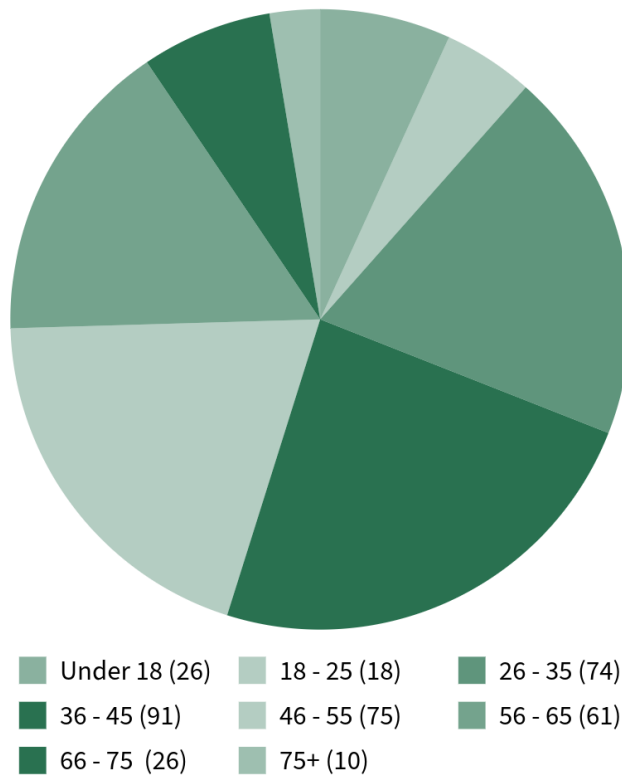
We published 10 social media posts, reaching an audience of more than 40,000.

We heard mostly from Canberran residents, across a good balance of ages. Of the 384 people who filled out the online survey, 95% identified as Canberra residents with 25% of respondents aged 36-45 and 78% aged between 26 and 65.

Where you said you live?



How old you said you are?



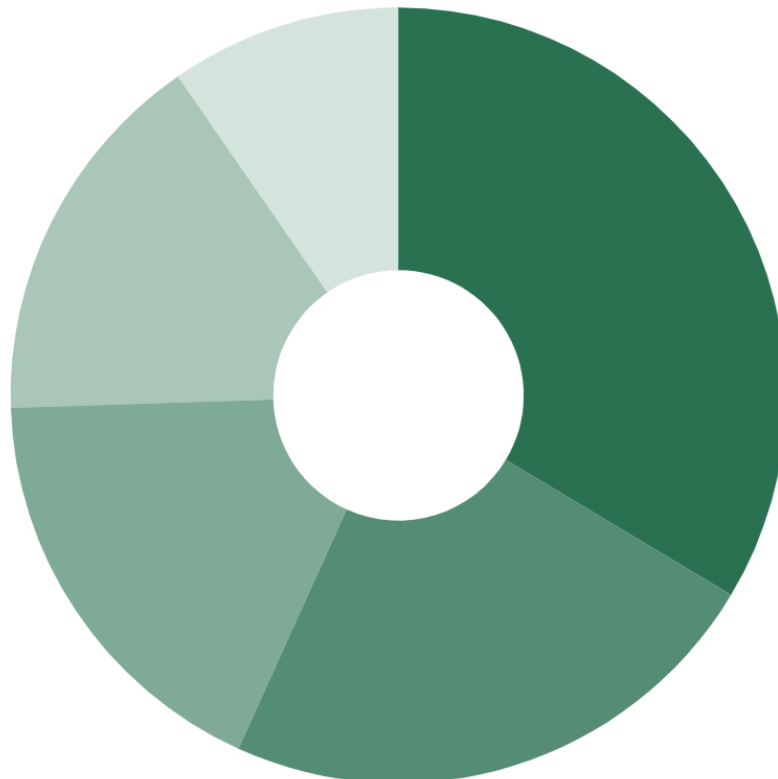
WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOUR SURVEY RESPONSES

Current uses of Commonwealth Park

Around 30% of respondents indicated they use Commonwealth Park at least monthly. The most popular areas visited are the Central Basin lake foreshore area with the most popular activities being walking, running and cycling around this popular loop.

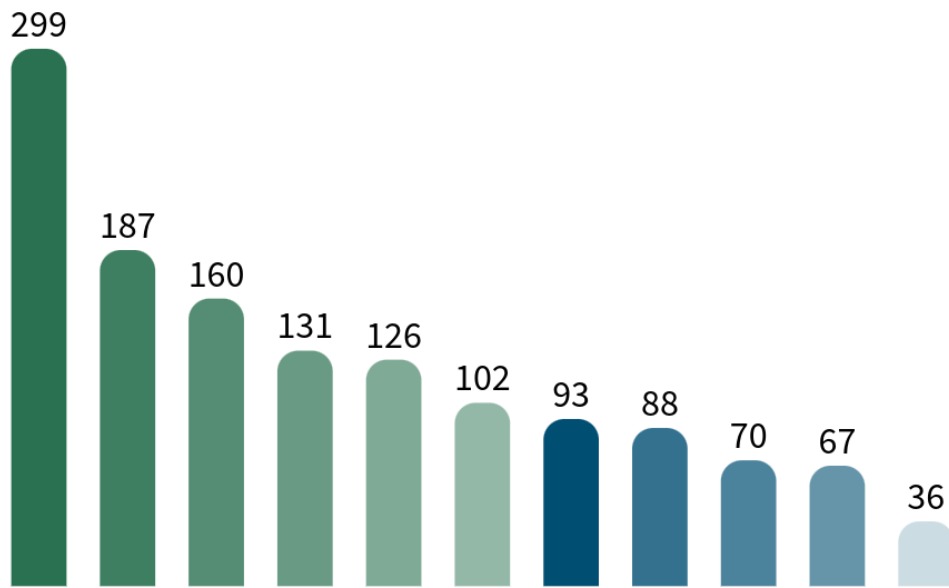
Respondents indicated a variety of favourite areas of Commonwealth Park reflecting the variety of offerings within the park, including events and general social recreation.

HOW often do you visit Commonwealth Park?



- A few times a year (33.6%)**
- Only for big events (23.2%)**
- I am there weekly (17.7%)**
- Every month (15.9%)**
- Other (9.6%)**

WHICH areas of Commonwealth Park do you visit?



- Walk/ride around the lake edge
- Regatta Point/ Canberra & Region Visitor Centre/ National Exhibition Centre
- Stage 88
- Nerang pool and garden areas
- Park/Gardens area (for picnics)
- Lily Pond
- Castle play area/ children's park area
- Nerang Pool
- Regatta Point Play area
- Marsh gardens
- I didn't know Commonwealth Park included all these areas

WHAT

activities are you doing when in Commonwealth Park?

Walking/ running - 264



Riding a bike - 142

Having a picnic - 139

Playing on the equipment - 75



Attending an event i.e a wedding - 43

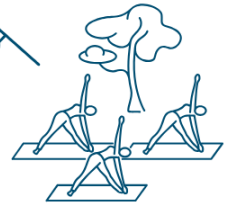
Attending a performance or festival - 201

Attending an organised community/charity event - 108



Participating in an exercise class - 14

Participating in a fun run/marathon - 33



Meeting up with friends - 200



Dining at the café - 124













Exploring the National Capital Exhibition - 58



Other - 40

WHAT

are your favourite parts of Commonwealth Park?

-   Lake & Lake Edge & Lakefront
-  Stage 88  Castle Playground & Fort
-  Gardens & Greenery & Trees
-  Regatta Point & Visitor Centre
-  Floriade & Flowers & Seasonal Displays
-   Walking & Cycling & Bike Paths
-  Peace & Quiet & Open Space

Thoughts on the future of Commonwealth Park

We received feedback on the Concept Vision itself as well as more general feedback about community's views on the future of Commonwealth Park.

The feedback reflects future intent of the park, future uses, ideas for new initiatives or activities and feedback on the priority issues to be considered in any reimagining of Commonwealth Park.

WHEN you think about the Commonwealth Park of the future, what words would you like to describe it?

A place for sport

A place to gather

A major Canberra destination

Innovative

Accessible

Sanctuary

A place for recreation

Full of gardens

Great for events

Unique

Open

A place that reflects Canberra's heritage

Enjoyable

Special

Memorable

**The larger or bolder words were more popular.

WHAT

are the future activities you would like to be able to do in Commonwealth Park?

A word cloud of future activities for Commonwealth Park. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with 'Skateboarding & Skatepark' being the largest and most prominent. Other large words include 'Walking', 'Swimming', 'Events', 'Cycling', 'Concerts', 'Gardens', 'Picnics', 'Aquatic Centre', and 'Stage 88'. Smaller words include 'Water Play', 'Accessibility', 'Dog-Friendly Facilities', 'Food', 'Connectivity', 'Cafes', 'Safety', 'Public Art', 'Nature', and 'Restaurants'.

Water Play Events Cycling

Accessibility Concerts

Walking Gardens Dog-Friendly
Picnics Facilities

Food

Swimming Connectivity

Skateboarding &

Cafes **Skatepark**

Safety Public Art Nature

Children's Play Stage 88

Aquatic Centre

Restaurants

**The larger or bolder words were more popular.

WHAT

are the future activities you would like to be able to do in Commonwealth Park?



Improved access
parking, connectivity,
paths, bike access etc.



**An upgraded major
outdoor event space**



Additional amenities
such as toilets, end of journey
facilities, picnic and BBQ areas or
seating, shading etc

WHAT WE HEARD ABOUT KEY PRECINCTS

STAGE 88

We heard the following specific feedback about Stage 88:

- Permanent seating at Stage 88 should be included in a small section to enhance useability and appeal of the venue.
- We heard concerns about the size of Stage 88 and noise impacts with increasing event activities in the park.

What are the highlights for you, when you attend an outdoor event at Stage 88

Open Space / Outdoors / Shade
love the natural setting



Food / Food Trucks / Vendors
being able to access these during events



Music / Concerts / Performances
lots of you have a favourite concert memory



Community / Atmosphere
there is value for the value the sense of togetherness



Event Variety / Cultural Festivals
Shoutout to the diverse programming



Picnic / Lawn Seating / Blankets
BYO style



Flying Foxes / Bats
unique to the venue



How could your Stage 88 experience be improved?

Accessibility / Parking /
Transport



Toilets / Amenities / Facilities



Seating / Amphitheatre Design



Shelter / Shade / Weather Protection



Stage Size / Sound / Lighting
Event Scale / Bigger Acts



Safety / Pathways / Lighting



AQUATIC CENTRE

- We heard support for a new aquatic centre at Commonwealth Park. User groups advocated such a facility should include indoor and outdoor pools, a competition standard 50m indoor swimming pool, indoor diving pool, associated dry land facilities as well as facilities to support training for relevant groups.
- User groups sought continued engagement regarding the aquatic centre design. In terms of design, it was suggested the centre should take in views of the lake.
- Accessibility, particularly ease of access to the pool from parking areas and fees, were raised as concerns.
- Some respondents were not supportive of relocating the pool to Commonwealth Park suggesting they would prefer an upgrade of the existing Canberra Olympic Pool or an alternative location.
- Other respondents were opposed to the aquatic centre at Commonwealth Park as they did not consider such a centre as having a national function and were concerned with the visual impact of a large, roofed structure on the Parliament House Vista heritage values.

Note: Since this consultation the ACT Government announced their plans to deliver a new aquatic centre at Commonwealth Park. For more information on the proposal and to stay updated, visit the ACT Government's YourSay Conversations website.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOUR DETAILED RESPONSES

Key insights gathered from feedback received across all engagement methods undertaken during the consultation period are reflected below.

It is not intended to reflect every individual comment, but to represent the key issues – both positive and negative, suggestions for change and to leave things unchanged – in a balanced summary of the feedback received.

General comments on the Concept Vision

- There was support for the potential of the Concept Vision to deliver key improvements in the areas of connectivity, heritage values and new recreational facilities, leading it to become more valuable an asset for Canberrans and visitors alike.
- We heard concerns on a range of matters including increased commercialisation and development, the possibility of future privatisation of the park and the potential for a lack of funding to deliver on the Concept Vision.
- There was concern about loss of a strategic goal for the park, leading to a complexity of multi-uses detracting from the green space sanctuary it has the potential to be.
- Ongoing engagement was a key theme throughout the feedback. Feedback emphasised the importance of coordination to ensure effective delivery of design, infrastructure and events.

Active travel, accessibility and transport

- Promotion of active travel as a means of reducing car dependency (and more broadly parking) was a theme throughout the feedback including in relation to infrastructure and wayfinding.
- There was support for improved access, connectivity and integration between Commonwealth Park and the broader city, including connectivity to the public transport network.
- We heard the desire for separated pathways for cyclists and other user groups (pedestrians, people walking dogs, people with prams, people with accessibility needs, etc).

- Several respondents stated the Central Basin area of Lake Burley Griffin is very busy, leading to congestion of paths and conflicts between cyclists and other users. Paths should be designed to high technical standards and represent world best practice.
- Respondents expressed concern about accessibility and connectivity for wheelchairs, prams and bikes (within the park and to the wider city area).
- There was support for proposed future links including a path connection between the Regatta Point Visitor Centre and the Lake Burley Griffin circuit and the new Allara Street footbridge connection.
- Parking received key mentions in relation to servicing the entire precinct (especially for the new aquatic centre) and the need for new parking structures to consider accessibility.
- We heard support for a ferry service connecting to other areas of the lake as well as the possibility of electric water scooters/ electric jet skis for commuters.
- There was commentary about the importance of public transport, specifically bus services, and about the future light rail services to Commonwealth Park.

Park amenities

- We heard support for additional amenities like seating, toilets (including accessible toilets), BBQs, sheltered picnic areas, food stall/cafes and a boardwalk.
- Park amenities could include a covered area providing protection from the weather.
- More innovative play areas should be provided.
- A potential relocation of the park depot to a more suitable location was well received.

Play

- A dedicated play precinct with inclusive, family-friendly facilities received support.
- Nature play should be incorporated with attractive planted surrounds to encourage interest in nature, botany and horticulture.
- Some respondents urged restraint and expressed a desire for natural, open spaces.
- We heard a broad range of ideas from the community for play elements including water play, interactive/scattered, sensory/educational, all-ages and abilities, adventure and sculptures/ climbing features. There was also

commentary about constructing a skatepark facility along with preservation of the existing castle playground.

Nerang Pool

- There was support for the revitalisation of Nerang Pool to enhance amenity, biodiversity, and event compatibility.
- We also heard boating should not be allowed on Nerang Pool and it should become an attractive feature of the park.

Events/Activations

- We heard general support for an improved event venue and encouragement of year-round activation of event spaces. Feedback highlighted the benefits of increased visitation to Canberra and provide for tourism to the ACT.
- Feedback emphasised key considerations including safe pedestrian movement and crowd/transport management during major events; accommodating vehicular access, including heavy vehicles for event installation and servicing.
- Floriade as an annual activation within Commonwealth Park attracted feedback in relation to its most suitable location (suggestions included an indoor venue such as the convention centre) as well as consideration for making its garden beds permanent installations (citing it being more sustainable and cost-effective).
- There was commentary about business opportunities which could be provided within Commonwealth Park. Examples given were local food/wine produce, entertainment activities, food vans (temporary and permanent), a wellness precinct, model boat hire business.
- We also heard there should be greater evaluation of the delivery, nature and siting of new event and recreational infrastructure.

Environment

Landscaping

- We heard the park should remain a park for people and event use. It should continue to distinguish itself from other significant landscapes such as the National Botanic Garden, National Arboretum and Kings Park.
- A landscape strategy should be determined for the western corner and edge of the park.
- Respondents supported the retention of the stream garden, marsh garden and ponds in keeping with the original design.
- We heard many comments regarding future landscaping of the park including:
 - general support for a new landscaped garden
 - consideration of international gardens and space
 - respect of past design intentions and heritage values
 - retention of public works of art/inclusion of new art (both temporary and permanent), commemorative plantings and horticultural gifts
 - inclusion of a scented or tactile garden or an arid garden with mixes of native and exotic plants
 - retain Commonwealth Park as green tree space to provide 'green lungs' for the city and plant more trees
 - more permanent gardens with paths, seats, shaded areas/shade trees
 - less of a focus on formal/themed style gardens
 - planting to avoid pests like shot hole borers and rabbit burrows
 - inclusion of improved or additional lighting which should be extended on the route back to Civic.

Flora and fauna

- We heard support for initiatives that minimise impacts on the flying fox population of the park such as no sealed paths near the colony, no proposed tree removals and reduced Floriade impacts.
- We heard concerns there may be significant impacts on the flying fox population due to noise from events or construction activities. Mitigation measures should include consideration of Stage 88 events, development of structures during winter and away from the bat colony and educational signage.

- Respondents also suggested consideration be given to the impact on birds and other species that inhabit or transit through Commonwealth Park.

Sustainability

- Feedback received referenced the importance of climate change considerations for future landscaping and infrastructure. Park improvements should be designed to be drought resistant and suitable for Canberra's climate. The design of the park should contribute to urban heat reduction and align with the ACT Urban Forest Strategy. As a large urban park it should enhance biodiversity, habitat for urban wildlife and protect waterways and/or improve lake water quality.
- Stormwater management and sustainable infrastructure should be integrated across the site.
- We also heard water quality issues at Nerang Pool and Coranderrk Pond should be addressed.
- There was a desire for electric vehicle charging stations to be provided within the park.

Concern was expressed about noise pollution from Parkes Way affecting the north/north-eastern features of the park.

NEXT STEPS

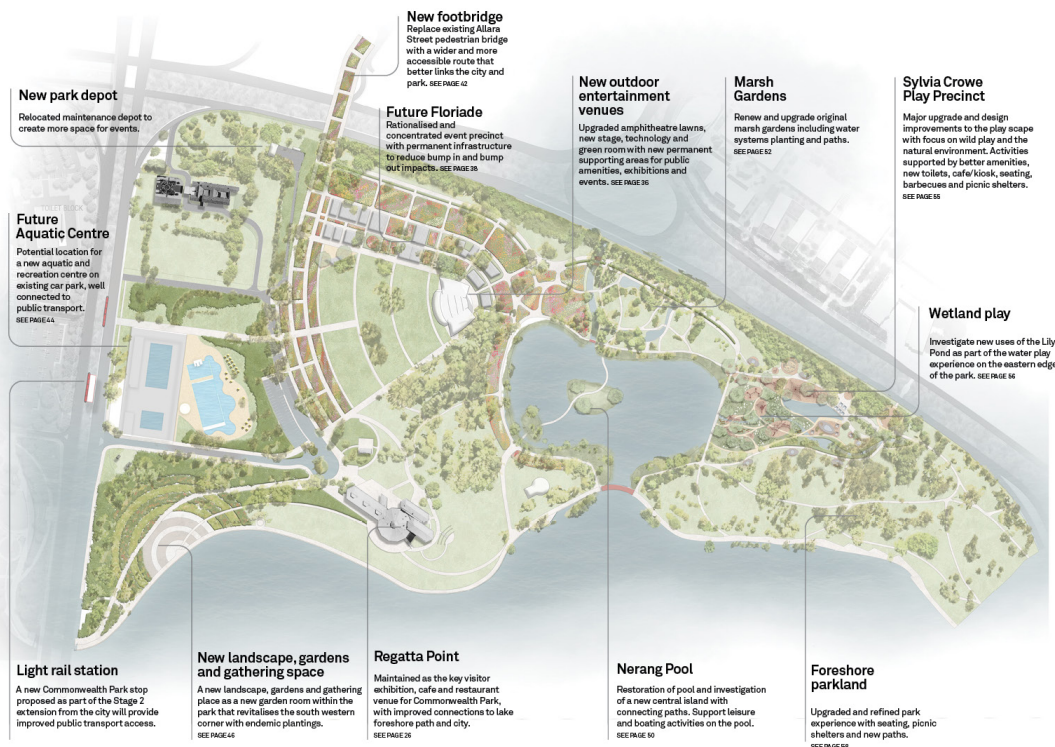
We want to thank everyone who provided feedback during the Commonwealth Park Concept Vision 2025 consultation period.

The revitalisation of Commonwealth Park is a long-term project. Work will be undertaken in stages and will be subject to detailed planning and design for each stage to progress any of the proposed initiatives presented in the Concept Vision.

Further community engagement will form part of any future processes and we will continue to engage with those key stakeholder groups who have provided feedback as well as with the broader community.

If you wish to stay involved in the work of the NCA, please sign up to receive email updates via our website at www.nca.gov.au.

We look forward to keeping you updated on progress in delivering the Commonwealth Park New Concept Vision 2025.





Australian Government
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THANK YOU

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