CM13.3. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park - Draft Concept Design - Public Exhibition

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Purpose of Report

To present the draft concept designs for the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park for consideration and endorsement, prior to placing the Oddies Creek Splash Park concept on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days.

Background

Oddies Creek Park is located in the Central Albury Riverside Parks, adjacent to Noreuil Park and Australia Park. A prominent landmark within Oddies Creek Park is a regional level play space, which attracts more than 200,000 visitors a year. The Oddies Creek Park Play Space was a signature project identified in the original Murray River Experience Master Plan (2007). The Play Space was opened in September 2011 and due to the high usage, an additional stage was completed in April 2019 as part of the NSW Government's Regional Growth, Environment and Tourism Fund program.

Many regional and metropolitan Councils provide a splash park for the enjoyment of their communities, however there are currently no splash parks situated within Albury or Wodonga that are free for community use. Consequently, there have been repeated requests from our community to construct a splash park, with many of these community requests occurring through AlburyCity engagement platforms. This feedback was most recently received during the community engagement for the Early Years and Young Peoples Plan, whereby provision of a splash park ranked high in the infrastructure request feedback. There was also general support expressed for a splash park that was requested by the community during the recent community consultation of the Murray River Experience Master Plan review.

Further momentum for a splash park was also realised with the announcement by the Australian Government that the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park was to be included as one of the projects identified within the Albury Wodonga Regional Projects initiative (formally Albury Wodonga Regional Deal). The Australian Government completed further feasibility and a cost-benefit-analysis of the proposed Oddies Creek Park Splash Park, before formally announcing an allocation of $2.5M toward the project.

As part of undertaking an appropriate level of due diligence for the splash park initiative, Council Officers prepared a Feasibility Study (Attachment 1) that investigated a variety of design considerations. The feasibility study identified a potential project cost estimate of up to $6.25M,

however this estimate included additional options to significantly improve amenities (including construction of shower facilities and new Changing Places accessible building), and also included design/project management costs, as well as a 20% contingency. To ensure the project is aligned to the organisation's financial sustainability objectives, the budget for the construction phase of the water play elements of the project will be capped at $5M (including $2.5M grant funding). Council's endorsed Four Year Delivery Plan currently has $175,000 allocated for 2025-26 and $3.3M for 2026-27. The 2026-27 budget allocation will be informed by the final detailed design and updated accordingly within the $5M cap.

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Attachment 2) was also prepared to enable further dedicated community consultation as part of the design process. At the Council meeting held on 12 August 2024, Council received and noted the Feasibility Study and endorsed the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Stakeholder Engagement Plan, thereby allowing the project to progress community consultation and commence concept design.

Following a procurement process for design services, Jazmax (previously known as Canvas) was engaged to develop designs for the splash park. The design process was underpinned by a community *Have Your Say* engagement (Attachment 3), with the resultant community submissions being used to inform the splash park design concepts. This report outlines the feedback received through the *Have Your Say* process and provides the draft concept designs (Attachment 4) for the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park for consideration and endorsement, prior to placing the draft concept designs on public exhibition.

Issues

Oddies Creek Splash Park - concept design elements

A detailed site analysis was the first consideration for the project, which sought to determine the best possible location within Oddies Creek Park to build the splash park. This site analysis investigated a range of key location considerations including:

- the need to complement the existing play space;
- utilisation of the existing raised earth mound area;
- connections with the proposed new car park within Australia Park;
- consideration of other park users, particularly off-leash dog park users;
- consideration of periodic flooding; and
- minimising impact on existing trees.

Four slightly different site location options were initially considered for their suitability to co-locate the proposed new splash park with the adjoining Oddies Creek Play Space. Upon further investigation, a fifth site option northeast of the existing playground and amenities embankment was identified as the preferred location, given its perceived benefits including proximity and connections to existing playground, amenities, car parking, and better natural shade. Further details of the site context analysis investigations (including benefits and potential constraints) are provided within the Concept Design Report (Attachment 4).

The concept design has been developed with a key design driver to forge a stronger visual and physical connection with the Murray River. As such, the draft Oddies Creek Splash Park concept design (Attachment 4) has been developed using strong riverine themes and proposes the following six water play zones:

1. *Murray River, Islands and anabranches* – Year-round nature play - exploratory, constructive, calm, safe, cooling and splashy water play including hand pumps, creek and weirs, shallow ponds, channels (universal access), boulders, log steppers, and nature play.
2. *Hume Weir* – Bigger splash play – interactive and active water play with drenching elements, water showers, water tunnels.
3. *Flood Plain* – Bigger splash play - interactive, competitive, active, playful, refreshing water play with cannons, showers, sprays.
4. *Islands and anabranches* – Little splash play - playful, surprising, calm, safe, cooling and splashy water play with boulders, geysers and vertical elements.
5. *Red Gum Forests* – Sculptural play - transition space, opportunity for storytelling, playful, surprising, commissioned artwork, year-round use vertical sculptural element/s.
6. *The Billabong* – Sculptural play - entry space, opportunity for First Nations storytelling, commissioned artwork, year-round use, playful and surprising - sculptural land-forming.

Shade has been identified as an integral part of the concept design with sculptural shade structures over the water play elements, shelters with seating throughout the site (locations to be determined through the detailed design process) with extensive landscaping and additional shade tree planting.

The concept design proposes to extend the play space fencing around the existing mound and new splash park area to create a single enclosed play area with unrestricted movement between the splash park and play space. This will result in the establishment of a very unique and consolidated regional play space area (with both wet and dry nature play elements), whilst still functioning to allow for a range of other passive recreational activities by the community throughout the wider Oddies Creek Park area.

Off-Leash dog area

The off-leash dog component of Oddies Creek Park is to be retained. The location of the new splash park and fence realignment does potentially reduce the extent of available off-leash area, however this loss will be offset with the proposed decommissioning of the adjacent gravel car park and the re-establishment of this area back to green space (proposed as part of the concurrent Australia Park Car Park project).

The main access points to the Oddies Creek Park off-leash area will be via:

- the Australia Park Car Park and footbridge which arrives at a junction point between the play space/splash park or wider Oddies Creek Park;
- new creek crossing providing access from Noreuil Park;
- Wagirra Trail Footbridge linking Noreuil Park to Oddies Creek Park;
- Wagirra Trail under the union Bridge; or
- via pathway along Wodonga Place.

The earthen mound that currently occupies the existing toilets and shelters will be incorporated into the fenced area and not readily accessible to off-leash area users (noting that dogs are not permitted within 10 metres of '*food preparation/consumption areas'* as outlined in the *NSW Government Animal Companion Act*). To provide shelter for the off-leash park users, at least one new shelter with seating is proposed to be provided outside the fenced area. The location of the shelter/s will form part of the next consultation phase during the public exhibition process.

Car parking

In a parallel project, the Australia Park Car Park is currently in the procurement phase for construction and scheduled to be to be presented to Council in September 2025 for awarding. This project will formalise 65 new car spaces, including four disabled parking spaces in the Australia Park site. Given that the existing gravel car park in the adjoining Oddies Creek Park is operating at capacity during weekends and school holiday periods, the proposed new car park in Australia Park is considered essential to cater for the uplift in patronage that is anticipated following commissioning of the new splash park and opening of the consolidated regional play space. Other works associated with the Australia Park project include upgrade of Ebden Street adjacent to Australia Park, realigning and upgrading of the South Albury levee, construction of linking pedestrian bridge between the new Australia Park Car Park and Oddies Creek Park, extensive revegetation of Oddies Creek, and other associated landscaping. Additional parking is available in Ebden Street, at the Noreuil Park Foreshore and in the wider Riverside Precinct area.

Community Engagement

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan was endorsed by Council at the Council meeting held on 12 August 2024 (Attachment 2) and outlined three phases of consultation, including:

- Stage 1 – Awareness raising and information gathering;
- Stage 2 – Test ideas/concepts for potential inclusion in the draft concept plan; and,
- Stage 3 – Public Exhibition of draft concept plan, prior to moving into detailed design.

Stage 1 consultation

The community 'Have Your Say' commenced on 23 January 2025 and closed on 28 February 2025 (36 days).

The quick poll question '*Would you visit the proposed Splash Park in Oddies Creek Park?*' had 1,218 votes received with an overwhelming 94.6% answering "yes" to the question.

Participants were also asked to rank potential splash park elements in order of priority. The results (in priority) from the 228 responses are outlined below:

1. Water showers.
2. Creek beds.
3. All seasons play.

4. Drenching elements.
5. Integrated seating.
6. Geysers.
7. Water Cannons.
8. Hand Pumps.

A free text area was available for further comments, with 173 individual responses received. The provision of shade (both built and natural) was a common theme in the feedback, with several respondents also requesting supporting amenity infrastructure such as BBQs, water taps, seating, shelters, and additional car parking. In terms of splash park design, there were a number of requests for the inclusion of natural elements in the splash park, whilst accessibility and inclusivity were also prominent responses, highlighting the importance of ensuring the splash park is welcoming and usable for people of all abilities.

The design consultant has utilised the results of Stage 1 Community Have Your Say to inform the concept design for the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park that is included as Attachment 4. A summary of the Stage 1 consultation is provided in the Concept Design Report in Attachment 4, while all community submissions received are included in Attachment 3.

In addition to the broader consultation, the design consultant met with representatives from the local Dyiraamalang Girbang First Nations Group. There were many opportunities for First Nations culture and storytelling identified, including:

- the importance of Oddies Creek as a meeting place on the water;
- the significance of the bogong moth;
- billabongs and circular passage of water; and
- the story of the bunyip and its connection to billabongs.

This First Nations feedback has been incorporated into some of the draft concept design elements within the splash park, and it is proposed to continue this First Nations engagement to further refine design elements as the project moves into detailed design.

Stage 2 consultation

Involved internal engagement and limited external consultation to test the ideas and work through versions of the concept design to produce the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design for Council consideration.

Stage 3 consultation

Following Council endorsement of the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept designs, the concept designs will be placed on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days. At the conclusion of the public exhibition period, feedback will be reviewed and the draft concept design amended (if required). A further report will be presented to Council that outlines the feedback received and the final version of Oddies Creek Park Splash Park for Council consideration and endorsement prior to commencing the detailed design phase.

Strategic Alignment

The project aligns with outcomes contained within *Towards Albury 2050* including:

A Growing Sustainable Economy:

1. Albury is a vibrant city, providing high quality sustainable infrastructure, industry–leading services and amenities.
   - 1.3.1 Create and support authentic and engaging visitor experiences.
   - 1.3.3 Build and maintain partnerships to attract visitation to our region, and increase the diversity in attractions, events and facilities for our community and visitors.

A Caring Community:

3.4 Albury is inclusive and accessible for all ages and abilities.
- 3.4.1 Plan and develop infrastructure that is accessible for all.

3.5 We are active, healthy and safe.
- 3.5.4 Provide high-quality parks, sporting spaces, natural areas and recreational facilities.

A Leading Community:

4.2 Our community's voice is considered in decision making.
- 4.2.1 Effectively engage the community on decisions that affect them.

Strategies

Early Years and Young Peoples Plan

The Early Years and Young Peoples Plan was endorsed by Council on 28 October 2024. The community told us that to make Albury a better place for young people they would like to see a splash park as a high priority.

Murray River Experience Master Plan

The Murray River Experience Master Plan identifies a new splash park as a proposed signature element within Oddies Creek Park. As part of the community consultation associated with the review of the Murray River Experience Master Plan, there was general support for the future splash park at Oddies Creek Park, with construction of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park ranking the second highest out of the nine priorities listed in the consultation process.

Inland Waterways and Drowning Prevention Strategy

Even though not a specific action identified in the Inland Waterways and Drowning Prevention Strategy, providing alternative water play facilities outside of the Murray River or Lake Hume aligns with some of the actions identified in the Strategy.

Albury Wodonga Regional Projects

The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park is one of the Albury Wodonga Regional Projects with $2.5M funding from the Australian Government.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – The initial project plan identified a $5M budget for the splash park project based on a 1:1 cost share arrangement with a $2.5M grant fund contribution from Australian Government, matched by a $2.5M AlburyCity contribution. Currently, the 2025-26 Four Year Delivery Program identifies $175K in 2025-26 to complete the detailed design, with $3.3M in 2026-27 for construction, however it is anticipated the construction budget will be revised upon completion of the detailed design when anticipated costs are more fully known (but will remain in the $5M cap).

  A more detailed cost estimate will be provided during the next design phase when more specifics are known with regards to geotechnical information and more details around the inclusion of water elements (this will impact pumping and ballast tank requirements).

  In addition to the capital costs for construction, there will also be a need to establish an ongoing operating budget for the splash park once it has been commissioned and become operational. The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study (Attachment 1) estimates initial annual operating costs of $169,500 p/a based on seven months operation (October-April) opening 10hrs/day. Further refinement of the operating costs will occur during the detailed design process. The high maintenance nature of a splash park will ultimately require additional personnel resources to assist with day-day management and operations. The extent of this resourcing will be influenced by the frequency and method of daily water testing that will be required, however further investigations will be undertaken to determine if this resourcing is undertaken by existing internal staff or by an external contractor.

- **Corporate Risk** – Council has received numerous community request for a splash park in Albury. Developing a concept design for the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park to meet these requests and engaging with the community through the design development phase provides a positive image for Council.

- **WHS and Public Risk** – WHS and risk management have been considered at a high level during the concept design development phase. Further risk management consideration (including consultation with Councils Insurer) will be undertaken during the detailed design phase, with all park elements required to comply with relevant Australian Standards. A more detailed risk assessment will also be completed as part of the commissioning of the play space to confirm compliance with relevant standards prior to opening the splash park.

- **Environmental Risk** – A Review of Environmental Factors (REF) will be undertaken during the detailed design phase and prior to construction. The concept design identifies the removal of four trees on site however, these trees are horticultural plantings and don't have any tree hollows. An initial site inspection with AlburyCity's Arborist identified high value trees on site, with these trees being retained within the current concept design. A detailed Tree Assessment Report will be completed prior to developing detailed designs. There are some large hollow bearing trees on site which are identified for retention, while there is also extensive tree planting identified as part of the concept design to further enhance shade and amenity in the

project area. This will result in an overall significant net increase of trees and canopy cover within the area.

Oddies Creek Park is subject to flooding, however the risk of flood impact will be mitigated through well-considered design inclusions. More specifically, all plant equipment is to be located above 1% AEP flood levels (AEP is the probability of a flood event of a given size occurring in any one year). This will be facilitated by constructing the plant room on top of the mound adjacent to the existing public toilets. It is also intended (subject to confirmation of geotechnical investigations) to construct the water play elements above the 20% AEP, which would minimise the impact on the water play elements during some minor flood events. Information gained through the feasibility study indicates that there will be additional cleaning of water play elements and water jets after flooding events however the minor additional maintenance is considered acceptable for the site. Further preventative measures can also be taken to minimise the impact if Council staff receive forewarning of a flood event.

- **Delivery Program Risk** – Project timing has been identified in the Project Management Plan and included in the funding deed with the Australian Government, with construction currently identified for completion in May 2026. However, these timeframes will be reviewed in light of the extensive delays associated with the execution of the funding deed, which was only signed in April 2025. Any delays in the project will require an approved variation to the funding deed.

Options

1. Endorse the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design and place the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days. **Recommended.**

   This is the preferred option as the community has already been engaged in providing preliminary input into the proposed splash park, with many of these suggestions incorporated into the draft concept design. Placing the concept design on public exhibition will enable the wider community to review the proposed concept elements and provider further feedback on the concept design, which can be considered further by Council prior to the project moving into detailed design; or

2. Do not endorse the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design and request amendments. **Not Recommended**.

   This is not the preferred option as the wider community are likely to provide comments that could lead to further amendments to the concept design. Placing the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design on public exhibition will provide this opportunity.

Conclusion

There are currently no splash parks situated within Albury or Wodonga that are free for community use, and as a consequence there have been repeated requests from our community to construct a splash park.

Oddies Creek Park is located in the Central Albury Riverside Parks, adjacent to Noreuil Park and Australia Park. This regional level play space attracts more than 200,000 visitors a year, and to further enhance this area a splash park was identified as a priority with the Murray River Experience Plan. Further to this, the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park was included as one of the signature projects identified within the Albury Wodonga Regional Projects (formally Albury Wodonga Regional Deal), with $2.5M grant funding allocated toward the project by the Australian Government.

The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study (Attachment 1) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Attachment 2) were endorsed by Council at the Council Meeting held on 12 August 2024 and following a procurement process, Jasmax (formerly Canvas) was engaged to complete the design process ready for construction.

A *Have Your Say* process was undertaken (Attachment 3) to provide the community with an opportunity to provide their feedback on the inclusion of a splash park in Oddies Creek Park. There was extensive community support for a splash park, with further engagement undertaken with the local Dyiraamalang Girbang First Nations Group to inform the development of the riverine themed draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept. With the draft concept now completed (Attachment 4), Council endorsement is now sought to place the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design on public exhibition. This will enable the community a further opportunity to provide feedback on the project prior to completing the detailed design process.

Oddies Creek Park Play Space is Albury's premier children's play area, and the proposal for the addition of a splash park to the regional play space will likely result in further uplift in visitation given the diverse and unique user experience on offer for our community and visitors to the area.

Recommendation

That Council:

a. receive and note the initial Have Your Say results for the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design;
b. endorse the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design and place the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days; and
c. if no submissions are received seeking amendments on the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design , that the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design be adopted as the final version.

Attachments

1. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park – Feasibility Study (DOC24/176975).
2. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park – Stakeholder Engagement Plan (DOC24/167425).
3. Have Your Say Consultation Results (DOC25/201849).
4. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Concept designs (DOC25/201518).