CM13.6. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park - Feasibility and Draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan

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Purpose of Report

To present the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study and Stakeholder Engagement Plan to Council for consideration and endorsement prior to progressing the community engagement process.

Background

Oddies Creek Park is located in the Central Albury Riverside Parks adjacent to Noreuil Park and Australia Park, and this regional level play space 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, Stage 2 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. To this extent, 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.

During the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan review process, splash park locations were considered in the Central Albury Riverside Parks area with Oddies Creek Park identified as the most suitable location. This generated further momentum for a splash park and resulted in the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park being included as one of the projects identified within the Albury Wodonga Regional Projects (formally Albury Wodonga Regional Deal) that was announced by the Australian Government in 2019, with a total proposed budget of $123.3M for projects across the Albury Wodonga region.

The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park was one of five projects within the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan that was prioritised for inclusion within the Albury Wodonga Regional Projects. Consequently, the Australian Government completed further feasibility and cost-benefit-analysis of the proposed Oddies Creek Park Splash Park, before formally announcing an allocation of $2.5M toward the project.

There was also general support expressed for a splash park that was requested by the community during the recent Stage 2 community consultation of the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan. Feedback from this consultation was provided to Council on 8 July 2024, whereby Council resolved to place the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan documentation (including the draft Central Riverside Parks Master Plan, draft Lake Hume Reserves Master Plan, and draft Murray River Experience Master Plan review) on public exhibition for a minimum of 56 days. Following the public exhibition period, a report will be prepared outlining the comments received, along with an officer's response and any proposed amendments to the draft Master Plan for Council's consideration.

Issues

Prior to commencing the splash park design process, further research and investigation has been undertaken to review a number of relevant splash park design considerations including:

- analysing a range of existing splash parks to determine optimum sizes, water element features, associated amenities, and operational and maintenance requirements;
- assessing the Oddies Creek Park location for site constraints such as flooding, and reviewing the site complexities (inclusive play, supervision, adjacent off leash area);
- consideration of potential splash park water elements;
- examination of filtration options (including siting and housing requirements);
- determination of suitable plant and equipment; and
- analysis of ongoing maintenance and operational costs.

The results of the above research and investigations have been documented within the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study (see Attachment 1). This Feasibility Study concluded that Oddies Creek Park is an ideal location for the splash park due to its central position, high visibility, and strong connections via shared pathways, trails and roads. The proximity to Albury's premier regional level play space, existing amenities and parking ensures ease of access for families and visitors. Additionally, the location offers a safe alternative to river activities by providing a controlled water play environment, which is strongly complimentary to the AlburyCity Inland Waterway Drowning Prevention Strategy.

In terms of site complexities, it was determined that the flood risk can be mitigated by ensuring the plant room is located above the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood level which can be achieved by co-locating with the existing amenities at Oddies Creek Park. The splash park is proposed to be fenced to provide additional safety for children, which will also allow the continuation of the adjoining off-leash dog park. The Oddies Creek Park regional play space will also be retained to complement the park offerings to the community, and existing trees also retained and incorporated into the design. The Feasibility Study also explored a range of plant equipment, filtration options and play elements that will need to be further explored and integrated into the design process.

The project is anticipated to be completed in 2026 in line with the Australian Government funding agreement. In giving effect to this, the next steps requiring targeted community consultation to better understand the communities' views on the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park proposal, and more specifically their preferences on potential features and play elements that can be incorporated into

the preliminary concept design. To support this community engagement, the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed (see Attachment 2) to ensure the community is appropriately engaged during the design phase, thus ensuring the project meets the needs and expectations of the community.

Strategic Links

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

A Growing Sustainable Economy:

1.1 Albury is a liveable city supporting sustainable population growth through the provision of high-quality infrastructure, industry –leading services and high levels of amenity.
- 1.3.1 Communicate the story of Albury through our tourism offerings, providing an authentic and engaging visitor experience.
- 1.3.3 Investigate partnerships to attract visitors to our region, and increase the diversity in attractions, events and facilities for our community and visitors.

A Caring Community:

3.3 Our community values arts, culture, heritage, and place. All residents share and celebrate our multiculturism in a welcoming and open community.
- 3.3.3 Our spaces will provide a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for our community to enjoy.

3.5 Albury is a safe, inclusive, and accessible region for our entire community.
- 3.5.2 Our buildings and spaces are designed to be inclusive and accessible to all community members.

A Leading Community:

4.2 Albury collaborates as a community to plan for the future and work towards a shared vision.
- 4.2.1 The community is consulted and engaged on important decisions in two-way conversations that result in informed decision making and shared leadership.

<u>Strategies</u>

Early Years and Young Peoples Plan (under development – public exhibition)

The Early Years and Young Peoples Plan has recently completed a Have Your Say process, with over 1,000 people providing feedback during this time. The community told us that to make Albury a better place they would like to see a splash park as a high priority, with Council resolving on 22 July 2024 to place the Plan on public exhibition for 28 days prior to finalising the Plan.

Murray River Experience Master Plan (under development - public exhibition)

A new splash park has been identified in the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan Review in Oddies Creek Park. Through Phase 2 consultation of the Master Plan Review 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. Council resolved on 8 July 2024 to place the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan documentation (including the draft Central Riverside Parks Master Plan, draft Lake Hume Reserves Master Plan, and draft Murray River Experience Master Plan Review) on public exhibition for a minimum of 56 days prior to finalising the documentation.

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** – A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared to ensure the community has opportunities to provide feedback through the life cycle of the project. The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study currently proposes a preliminary estimate of $6.25M, which includes a $2.5M funding contribution from the Australian Government as part of the Albury Wodonga Regional Projects package. There is currently a $5M budget included within the approved AlburyCity 2024-2028 Four Year Delivery Program, and this figure can be reviewed in subsequent budgets as design progresses and more accurate cost estimates are developed. In broad terms the proposed construction budget currently includes:

    - $4.00M - Water Play Area (design and construct);
    - $0.15M - landscaping elements;
    - $0.80M - amenities, disabled toilet and changing places;
    - $1.00M - contingency (~20%); and
    - $0.30M - Project Management.

    The Feasibility Study also completed an initial analysis of ongoing operational costs, which identified anticipated annual operating costs in the order of $130-$165K p/a, based on seven months operation (October-April) and opening 10hrs/day. All costs including construction and annual operating costs will be further refined as the project moves through the design phase.

- **Corporate Risk** – The Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the project provides a framework whereby stakeholders and the wider community can initially review the feasibility and provide input into the concept design phase of the project. The three-stage consultation will provide a level of transparency through all proposed project phases. Following the initial engagement, expectations that the splash park will be constructed soon after will need to be managed carefully. Clear achievable timelines are to be included in regular community updates.

- **WHS and Public Risk** – These are not considered in the development of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or Feasibility Study, however will be considered in detail during the design and project delivery phases of the project, to ensure the splash park is safe, fit for purpose, and designed in accordance with all relevant standards and legislative requirements.

- **Environmental Risk** – These are not considered in the development of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan or Feasibility Study. Environmental issues will be considered during the design and project delivery phases of the project, with an intent to embrace and retain existing trees and natural features on site.

- **Delivery Program Risk** – Endorsement of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Feasibility Study will allow commencement of specific consultation for this project and allow the community to have input into the project. Project timing has been identified in the Project Management Plan and included in the funding deed with the Australian Government. These will be reviewed as project phases are completed.

Community Engagement

The recently completed Phase 2 consultation community engagement for the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan Review demonstrated support for the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park at a high level. In addition, the community consultation that has recently occurred as part of the proposed Australia Park Improvements Project, has also resulted in strong community support for a splash park. With strong levels of support already identified for a splash park, it is now timely to undertake some dedicated splash park engagement to better understand the community views on splash park features and play elements that can be incorporated into the draft concept design. To this extent, the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared to ensure the community is provided with the necessary project details and to identify the range of opportunities that the community can be involved and provide feedback on the project.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan outlines 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.

Options

1. Endorse the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and progress community consultation to inform the concept design for further consideration by Council. **Recommended**

   This is the preferred option as it will provide the community with a range of opportunities to have input into the project prior to Council endorsement and moving into construction.

2. Not endorse the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and request amendments. **Not Recommended**

   This option is not recommended as the proposed Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been prepared to allow the community to have additional input into the project and further inform the design brief.

Conclusion

Oddies Creek Park is located in the Central Albury Riverside Parks adjacent to Noreuil Park and Australia Park. The regional level play space attracts more than 200,000 visitors a year and was a signature project identified in the original Murray River Experience Master Plan (2007). The play space was opened in September 2011 with Stage 2 completed in April 2019.

There are currently no splash parks situated within Albury or Wodonga that are free for community use, and there have been repeated requests from our community to construct a splash park, with many of these community requests occurring through several AlburyCity engagement platforms.

During the draft Murray River Experience Master Plan Review process, splash park locations were considered in the Central Albury Riverside Parks area with Oddies Creek Park identified as the most suitable location. Further support for this location was considered through a KPMG feasibility analysis and cost-benefit-analysis, which ultimately resulted in the Australian Government allocating $2.5M toward the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park.

As part of undertaking due diligence for the project, the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study was developed following research and investigation of six splash parks. The Feasibility Study has determined that the Oddies Creek Park site is a suitable location and outlines the splash park requirements, budget and timeline for inclusion into a design brief, and facilitates engagement of a suitably qualified splash park design consultant.

Endorsement of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan will enable further dedicated community consultation and ensure the community are appropriately engaged during the design phase, thus ensuring the project meets the needs and expectations of the community.

Recommendation

That Council:

a. receive and note the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study (Attachment 1), and contents of this report; and

b. endorse the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Attachment 2), and progress community consultation to inform the concept design for further consideration by Council.

Attachments

1. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park – Feasibility Study (DOC24/176975).
2. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park – Stakeholder Engagement Plan (DOC24/167425).