CM13.8. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park - Public Exhibition Submissions

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Purpose of Report

To provide Council with a summary of feedback received during the Public Exhibition of the Draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Concept Design and seek endorsement for the final version of this concept design. To also seek Council endorsement to progress to construction-ready detailed design and return to Council prior to commencing procurement for the construction of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park.

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 each year. The Oddies Creek Park Play Space was a signature project identified in the original Murray River Experience Master Plan (2007). The Oddies Creek Park Play Space was opened in September 2011 and due to 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.

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 (formerly Albury Wodonga Regional Deal). The Australian Government completed a feasibility and cost-benefit-analysis of the proposed Oddies Creek Park Splash Park, before formally announcing an allocation of $2.5M toward the project.

Following Council's endorsement of the feasibility study and Stakeholder Engagement Plan in August 2024, Jasmax (formerly Canvas) was engaged through a procurement process to develop concept designs for the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park.

The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park will be the region's first splash park, designed for people of all ages and abilities. It will provide a safe, fun, and inclusive space for families to cool off, offering an alternative to the river and helping everyone enjoy water play in a secure environment. The splash park forms a part of AlburyCity's commitment to creating accessible, vibrant recreational spaces that bring people together, support healthy lifestyles, and celebrate our community's unique character.

The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park seeks to:

- provide the first designated splash park in Albury and Wodonga;
- provide a safe water play alternative to the river;
- offer the opportunity for all ages and abilities to enjoy free and safe water play;
- provide an opportunity for the community to be active which improves the health and wellbeing for these community members;
- provide improved amenity, experience and liveability for local residents; and
- provide a destination water play space that promotes the retention and attraction of tourists.

As a part of the concept plan development, Jasmax (formerly Canvas) has produced the Oddies Creek Splash Park Design Report (Attachment 1). This design report provides a detailed site context and analysis and talks to the vision and themes of the concept design. Forming a part of the design report is the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design.

Oddies Creek Park 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.

The outcome of the site analysis determined that the site northeast of the existing playground and amenities embankment was the preferred location. This was due to its perceived benefits including proximity and connections to existing playground, amenities, car parking, and better natural shade.

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 Park Splash Park concept design 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, Australia Park, and Noreuil Park areas.

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 (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 the 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.

Car parking

In a parallel project, the Australia Park Car Park is currently under construction. This project will formalise 65 new car spaces, including four disabled parking spaces in the Australia Park site, adjacent to this site. Additional parking is available in Ebden Street (currently being reconstructed as part of the Australia Park Car Park works), 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, 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.

The results of the Public Exhibition (Stage 3) are being presented in this report.

Stage 1 Consultation

The initial community 'Have Your Say' commenced on 23 January 2025 and closed on 28 February 2025 (36 days). The results of this consultation have previously been presented to Council and used to inform the development of the concept design discussed in this report.

Stage 2 Consultation

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

The project was presented to representatives from the Dyiraamalang Girbang Group on 11 April 2025. Many opportunities for First Nations culture and storytelling were identified including the importance of Oddies Creek as a meeting place on the water, the significance of the Bogong Moth, billabongs and the circular passage of water and the story of the bunyip and its connection to billabongs.

Stage 3 Consultation

The public exhibition period for the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design commenced on 26 August 2025 and closed on 26 September 2025. The consultation period was promoted through:

- establishment of the Public Exhibition page on the Engaging Albury website;
- social media posts;
- onsite posters erected at Oddies Creek Play Space and Noreuil Park with a QR code link back to the Have Your Say webpage;
- a notification sent to Engaging Albury subscribers;
- an article in the Border Mail (August 26, 2025); and
- notification of submitters involved in the initial Have Your Say process.

Three pop up sessions were also held to promote this project and engage with our community. Two of these sessions were held on site at the Oddies Creek Play Space (12 September and 13 September) and another at QEII Square (3 September). All were well attended and well received by the community.

During the public exhibition period the 'Have your Say' web page had 1,860 visits from 1,644 different visitors. At the conclusion of the public exhibition period there were a total of 120 submissions that included 119 submissions received through the online platform and one submission received by direct email. A copy of the full submissions (with personal contact details redacted) and an Officers' response is included as Attachment 2.

Public Exhibition Summary

There was overwhelming support for the concept design as follows:

- 92 submissions (77.31%) expressed support;
- 2 submissions (1.68%) opposed the splash park; and
- 25 submissions (21.01%) were neutral/unclear on their significant support.

The main themes from the public submissions are outlined below.

Strong overall support for the project, with significant positive sentiment

The community feedback for the Oddies Creek Splash Park project demonstrates strong overall support for the concept, with many respondents describing it as an exciting and much-needed addition to Albury's recreational offerings. Families particularly value the idea of a safe water play environment as an alternative to the river, which is often considered hazardous for young children. This sentiment underscores the importance of creating inclusive spaces that encourage outdoor activity while prioritising safety.

Enhanced seating and amenities, including picnic tables, BBQ facilities and comfortable spaces for supervision

A recurring theme throughout the feedback is the need for enhanced seating and amenities. Respondents emphasised the importance of picnic tables, benches, BBQ facilities and shaded areas to ensure comfort for supervising parents and to accommodate social gatherings such as birthday parties. Shade was highlighted as a critical element, not only for comfort but also for safety during the region's hot summer months. As this is only a concept design these items have only been considered at a high level and will be considered further through the detailed design process.

Improved car parking capacity to accommodate increased visitation

Car parking emerged as another significant concern. Many community members noted that existing parking facilities are already under pressure and advocated for additional spaces to support increased visitation. The construction of the Australia Park Car Park is currently underway (65 spaces). Additional parking is available in Ebden Street (currently being reconstructed as part of the Australia Park Car Park works), Noreuil Park Foreshore, and in the wider Riverside Precinct area.

Inclusive accessibility features, such as wheelchair-friendly design and provision for water wheelchair storage

Accessibility was also a key priority, with calls for wheelchair-friendly pathways, pram access, and provision for water wheelchair storage. Accessibility is a key design criterion for the area and will be a major consideration throughout the remaining design process. A wheelchair storage area will also be included in the associated building design. Some respondents suggested the inclusion of Changing Places facilities and sensory-friendly zones to cater to individuals with diverse needs. Changing Places facilities are not included in the construction budget however could be considered as a future stage, noting there is a Changing Places facility at Hovell Tree Park, adjacent to the Wood Fired Oven.

Toilet access for all park users, with consideration for fencing and shared facilities

Installing a fence around the splash park will create a barrier to the public toilets for other park users. Concerns were raised about maintaining toilet access for broader park users, including dog walkers, without compromising safety. During the detailed design process, the alignment of the fence will be considered to ensure a gate is located near the toilets to provide easy access to all park users.

Safety measures, including fencing between the splash park and existing play space

Fencing was frequently mentioned in submissions, with parents requesting secure, gated areas to separate the splash park from the existing playground. At this stage a fence between the play space and splash park is not proposed, however this feedback will be considered further through the detailed design process.

Surface safety concerns, particularly around slip resistance in water play areas

Surface safety was another point of discussion, with respondents urging the use of non-slip materials to prevent accidents. This is a major consideration that will be addressed when selecting materials and finishes during the detailed design process.

Design aesthetics, with requests for more vibrant colours alongside natural themes

Design aesthetics attracted mixed opinions. While many appreciated the natural tones and integration with the local landscape, others advocated for more vibrant colours to create a playful and engaging environment for children. Suggestions for interactive water features such as tipping buckets, slides, and water cannons were common, reflecting a desire for high-energy play elements that appeal to a wide age range. It is intended to introduce additional colour into the design, drawing inspiration from the vibrant tones found in the local environment The colour will be through planting, sculptural elements, and interactive features. This approach will help maintain the natural aesthetic while adding visual interest and playful energy to the space.

Opportunities for activation, such as food and beverage vendors to enhance visitor experience

Several respondents expressed interest in activation opportunities, such as food and beverage vendors or pop-up stalls, to enhance the visitor experience and encourage longer stays. The Riverside

Precinct in Hovell Tree Park has been designed to accommodate pop-up vendors and food trucks as it is Albury's premier event space, but vendor uptake has historically been low. Vendors wishing to operate in this space can apply for a permit for pop-up vendors through the Commercial Activities on Public Land Application.

Preservation of off-leash dog areas, minimising impact on existing community spaces

Concerns were raised about preserving the existing off-leash dog area and minimising conflicts between different user groups. The design has been carefully planned to retain river frontage for dog access and ensure physical separation between the splash park and dog-friendly zones. The project will involve the installation of at least one shelter with seating outside the fenced area to ensure park users outside the fence area have an area to sit.

Adequate shade and shelter to ensure comfort during warmer months

Shade was highlighted as a critical element, not only for comfort but also for safety during the region's hot summer months. The concept design has a mix of structured shade as well as additional tree planting. This will be further refined through the detailed design process.

It is anticipated that prior to moving into detailed design, this concept will be presented to the November 2025 Albury Aboriginal Advisory Committee meeting for initial discussions, input and review. The project team will continue to engage with First Nations representatives as the project develops to enable the integration and celebration of First Nations stories through this project.

The themes raised via the community feedback through the public exhibition process has not required any amendments to the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design, noting that some of the feedback received can be included in the detailed design process. Therefore, it is recommended that the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design be endorsed as the final version.

Strategic Alignment

Towards Albury 2050

A Growing Sustainable Economy:

1.3 Albury offers and supports diverse and evolving tourism experiences.
- 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 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.

The NSW Public Spaces Charter and the accompanying 10 principles for quality open space

- Principle #1: Open and Welcoming – everyone can access public space and feel welcome, respected and included.
- Principle #2: Community Focused – public space brings people together and builds strong, connected and resilient communities.
- Principle #3: Culture and Creativity – public space provides a platform for culture and creative expression that makes places more colourful, animated, and thought provoking.
- Principle #4: Local Character and Identity – public space reflects who we are and our diverse stories and histories.
- Principle #5: Green and Resilient – public space connects us to nature, enhances biodiversity and builds climate resilience into communities.
- Principle #6: Healthy and Active – public space allows everyone to participate in activities that strengthen our health and wellbeing.
- Principle #8: Safe and Secure – everyone feels safe to access and use public space at all times of the day.
- Principle #9: Designed for Place – public space is flexible and responds to its environment to meet the needs of its community.
- Principle #10: Well-managed – well-managed and maintained public space functions better and invites people to use and care for it.

AlburyCity Disability Inclusion Action Plan

2.3 Continue to make parks and play spaces more accessible and inclusive, with design informed by the 'Everyone Can Play Guidelines'.

Albury Wodonga Regional Projects

Enabled by a statement of intent signed in July 2020 the landmark agreement bought together local. state and federal government funding. An investment of $80M by the Federal Government, $15M by the NSW Government and contributions by AlburyCity ($37.8M) and Wodonga Council. The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park is one of the Albury Wodonga Regional Projects with $2.5M in funding from the Australian Government and matching $2.5M contribution from AlburyCity for construction.

Risk

- **Business Risk** – the initial project plan identified a $5M budget for the splash park project, based on a 1:1 cost share arrangement, which is reflected in the funding deed with a $2.5M grant fund contribution from the Australian Government matched by a $2.5M AlburyCity contribution. Currently, the approved Four-Year Delivery Program identifies $175,000 in the 2025/26 financial year budget to undertake the detailed design, with a preliminary budget allocation of $3.3M identified in the 2026/27 financial year budget for construction (including the $2.5M Australian Government grant funding). This leaves a budget shortfall of up to $1.7M in terms of AlburyCity's funding contribution, which will potentially require a budget adjustment as part of building the 2026/27 AlburyCity New Initiatives budget to ensure AlburyCity is able to match the Australian Government's $2.5M contribution. The construction cost will be further refined throughout the detailed design phase, noting a value management process is currently in place to ensure the construction project budget does not exceed $5M. Engagement of an independent professional to peer review the project specifications will be part of the value management to ensure that future costings are a true reflection of the current market.

  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 becomes operational. The Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Feasibility Study estimates initial annual operating costs of $169,500 per annum, based on seven months of operation (October-April), opening 10 hours per 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-to-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 council officers or by an external contractor.

- **Corporate Risk** – Council has received numerous community requests 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 considerations (including consultation with Council's 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 splash park to confirm compliance with relevant standards prior to opening.

- **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. These trees are horticultural plantings and are not hollow bearing trees. 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 the detailed design. Large hollow bearing trees occurring on site are all 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.

- **Four-Year Delivery Program or General 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

That Council:

1. Endorses the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design, as exhibited, as the final version of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design and progress to construction-ready detailed design and considers staging to align with available funding of up to $5M, which will return to Council prior to commencing a procurement process.
   Recommended

   This is the preferred option given Council's current financial sustainability challenges, and provides an opportunity for Council to consider the detailed design in the context of the project budget and Council's Four-Year Delivery Plan. Public feedback generally supports the concept design and proposal for a splash park in Albury.

2. Endorses the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design, as exhibited, as the final version of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design and progress to construction-ready detailed design and considers staging to align with available funding of up to $5M and progress through to the procurement for the construction of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park.
   Not Recommended

This option is the preferrable alternative to the recommended option and allows the project to continue within the $5M budget and supports feedback received through the public exhibition process which was typically supportive of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design.

3. Does not endorse the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design as the final version of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design, and requests amendments.
Not Recommended

This is not the preferred option as there have been two opportunities for stakeholders and the general community to provide input into the development of the draft concept design. As indicated in the feedback received, there is general community support of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park project with no amendments required as a result of the feedback received through the public exhibition.

4. Endorses the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design, as exhibited, as the final version of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design, however determines to pause on the project for up to 12 months, pending the outcome of a range of reviews currently underway in relation to Council's financial position and capital program priorities.
Not Recommended

Not progressing the project to detailed design and seeking an extension of the works will impact the project's timing and AlburyCity's obligations under the Funding Deed. AlburyCity would be required to renegotiate the milestones of the Funding Deed with the Commonwealth Government, noting this might not be acceptable to both funding bodies. Any delay in commencing will potentially impact project costs.

5. Does not endorse the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design as the final version of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design and, pursuant to the Funding Deed, immediately notifies the Australian Government that Albury City Council is unable to proceed with the project.
Not Recommended

Over the past 10 years, AlburyCity has invested significant funds and resources to progress the project. Advocacy efforts secured $2.5M in funding from the Australian Government. The investment supports the region's vision for economic development and enhanced liveability and exemplifies the Albury Wodonga Regional Project's objective to deliver infrastructure that fosters growth, connectivity and opportunity across the border region. Not proceeding with the project would forfeit $2.5M in grant funding, and risks reputational damage, erosion of stakeholder confidence and the success of future grant applications should the project not proceed.

6. Renegotiates its project funding co-contribution with the Australian Government, and seeks to reduce our contribution from $2.5M to $1M, which would require value-managing the design scope to a total project construction cost of $3.5M.
Not Recommended

AlburyCity advocacy efforts to secure the $2.5M funding from the Australian Government were undertaken in good faith based on a 1:1 cost share arrangement. There is a risk that attempting to renegotiate our funding contribution may result in reputational damage, erosion of stakeholder confidence and/or a commensurate reduction in funding by the Australian Government. This may seriously reduce the project scope and jeopardise the ability to deliver the full range of quality outcomes sought by this project for our community.

Conclusion

The draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design was endorsed for public exhibition by Council on 24 August 2025. Following the public exhibition period, 120 submissions were received. Feedback from the submissions was typically positive and supportive with no amendments to the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design required or proposed as a result of feedback received (noting some suggestions will be considered further as part of the detailed design process).

As there are no amendments required to the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design, the draft Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design should be endorsed as the final version and the design process continue through the detailed design phase and to procurement for construction.

Recommendation

That Council:

a. receives and notes the community feedback received through the public exhibition process;
b. endorses the final version of the Oddies Creek Park Splash Park concept design;
c. continues the project through the detailed design phase and considers staging to align with available funding in accordance with the design contract and project budget of up to $5M; and
d. receives the final detailed design prior to commencing a procurement process for the construction of the Oddies Creek Splash Park.

Attachments

1. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Concept Design Report (DOC25/201518).
2. Oddies Creek Park Splash Park Public Exhibition Consultation Report (DOC25/303778).