



FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Creekline Engagement Report

August 2020

Community, engagement, research



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Introduction

This report provides a summary of community engagement undertaken by Cred Consulting on behalf of Fairfield City Council to inform the development of the Open Space and Recreation Needs Study.

About the open space and recreation Strategy

Fairfield City Council is currently working on an Open Space and Recreation Strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that there is adequate open space to support a growing community over the next 20 years.

Purpose of the workshop

The five creeks that run through Fairfield City bring unique opportunities for recreation and open space. Many of the creeks are lined with paths that offer walking and cycling opportunities. The creeklines are also important habitat for flora and fauna and support cooling the city. Because of their importance, as part of the Open Space Strategy, Council sought to hear from the community about how they currently use the creeklines and other opportunities that would enhance this unique asset.

The engagement process aimed to actively involve the community in the strategy development process, and to understand the community vision for open spaces across Fairfield City.

About the Online workshops

The workshop was promoted online via a survey for participants to register their interest in taking part in the sessions.

The first online workshop was held on 19 May 2020 at 11am to 12pm, followed by the second online workshop held on 21 May 2020 at 4pm to 5pm. A total of 13 participants took part in the online workshops.

COVID-19 response

Community engagement was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to closures of parks, playgrounds and other Council services, this online workshop was designed to be an interactive walk-shop, with participants walking along the creeks as we discuss the top priorities for the future of creeks in Fairfield City.

Our response was to adapt the methodology for increased targeted and virtual engagement opportunities, including transforming the walk-shops into interactive online workshops.

Overview of Workshop Activities

Getting to know you and your experience with creeks in Fairfield City

Participants are asked to introduce themselves and talk about their connection and experience with creeks across Fairfield City.

Activity 1 - Love / Change

In this activity, participants are shown a series of pictures of open spaces across Fairfield City. Each participant is asked to write down one thing they love about each photo, and one thing they would change.

Activity 2 - What would you like to see in creeks across Fairfield City?

In this activity, participants are shown a series of images in order to prompt discussion around what they would like to see across creeks in Fairfield City. Participants were asked to indicate whether they agree, disagree, or somewhat agree for each idea shown in the scenario card, and to tell us 'what', 'why' and 'where' they would like these ideas to take place in Fairfield City.

Key findings

Cred Consulting on behalf of Fairfield City Council engaged with community members in two online workshops to inform the Open Space and Recreation Needs Study. A total of 13 participants took part in the workshops. This section provides a high level overview of themes that emerged from community engagement. Further detail by activity type is provided within section 2 of this report.



A need for improved active transport links and way-finding to support recreation, access and safety

Across the workshops participants indicated that cycleways and walking tracks along the creek lines play an important role for recreation and connecting the community to open spaces in Fairfield City, however there are opportunities to further enhance the network through improved active transport links and way-finding.

Participants identified an opportunity to increase safety and accessibility of cycling and walking paths, including improved surfacing, widening of pathways to improve shared use, connecting pathways to open spaces for recreation, and increased lighting to improve accessibility at night.

Participants would also like to see better connections from parks and open spaces along the creek lines for pedestrians, with a particular interest in the installment of pedestrian bridges to safely connect walkways along the creek line and to avoid being in close proximity of roads and traffic.

Wayfinding and signage along creek lines and open spaces was also strongly desired by participants. Ideas included increased markings along cycleways and pedestrians paths, as well as signage to improve connections and directions along the creek lines and to open and recreational spaces including playgrounds.

There was also an identified opportunity to enable the community to better understand local and native species and habitats in the area through signage, and creative and culturally inclusive signage to inform the community of native species and habitats along the creek lines.



Maintaining and rejuvenating the creek lines and waters in Fairfield City

Participants strongly recognised that creeks and their natural surroundings in Fairfield City have significant social, cultural and ecological value. The majority of participants indicated they would like to see improvements to the natural environments around the creek lines, with a strong consensus on sustainability, preservation and retaining natural assets of the area as the key priority for future planning.

Participants would like to see improved water quality in creeks across Fairfield City, and increased management of littering and rubbish dumping, particularly with the increased incidents of trolleys pushed into the creeks. One idea raised to combat littering and pollution included increased education, particularly in primary and secondary schools, around the importance of maintaining natural areas, and to encourage active participation in preserving creeks across Fairfield City.

Council's past creek restoration program was also praised, with some participants describing the value that the program has brought to their area, both in increasing urban habitat and providing a shady recreation path since the initial restoration.

Participants would like to see increased naturalisation of stormwater channels across Fairfield City, as well as improved maintenance of vegetation and increased preservation of natural habitats and species native to the Fairfield City community.



Activating the creek lines and open spaces across Fairfield City

There was an acknowledgment that Fairfield City's creeklines are a unique recreation experience for residents that present many opportunities for further activation in partnership with the community.

Participants would like to see more public art, particularly in areas where visual aesthetics could be improved, including along back fences and pedestrian bridges. The majority of the group also indicated there is an opportunity for increased local artist contributions, and for more representative creative and interpretive signage that highlights Aboriginal stories and other areas of historical significance along the creek lines.



Increasing tree canopy and shade cover to provide cooling and comfort

Participants identified the need for increased shade and trees to provide cooling and comfort during hot summer months, reflecting Fairfield City's relatively low tree canopy.

Priority areas for shading were footpaths and streets to support recreation activities such as walking and cycling, as well as parks and open spaces.

Participants would like to see more strategically planted trees along open spaces and pathways, ensuring there is plenty of shade as well as sufficient open space to move around. Native plants and trees were also strongly desired by participants.



Increasing the amenity along the creek lines and open spaces

Participants indicated there is a strong need of amenities along the creek lines and open spaces in Fairfield City, such as seating, tables, lighting, shade, and water stations.

Increasing amenity of open spaces, and particularly access along the creek lines, was identified as an opportunity for improved utilisation of creeks and open spaces across Fairfield City. However, participants indicated that in doing so, sustainability is a key consideration, and introducing new amenities should have minimal impact on the natural environment.

Workshop activity outcomes

This section describes the detailed findings from each activity. Following an ice-breaker where participants were invited to share their connection to the creek-lines, there were two main activities that aimed to better understand the experience of the creeks now, and possible scenarios for change into the future.

Selected verbatim quotes from the online community engagement workshop



"I would like to see lighting for courts to be used after 5pm"

"I have been living in Fairfield for 10 years and I think it is a beautiful area but creeks need some working, especially with the dirt. I have connection to the creeks as me and my cousins used to walk and have a run along the creeks"



"I have lots of children, so we use the bike tracks a lot, so mainly Orphan School Creek and Green Valley Creek. Bike riding, roller blading. Kids like to explore the water."

"I remember swimming in the Creeks when I was younger, and now sometimes ride my bike along the creek, and go for jogs along the walking trails of the creek"



"Me and my family using and visiting different creeks mainly for walking, but our children like to bike ride as well. Especially now, we are enjoying nature even more"

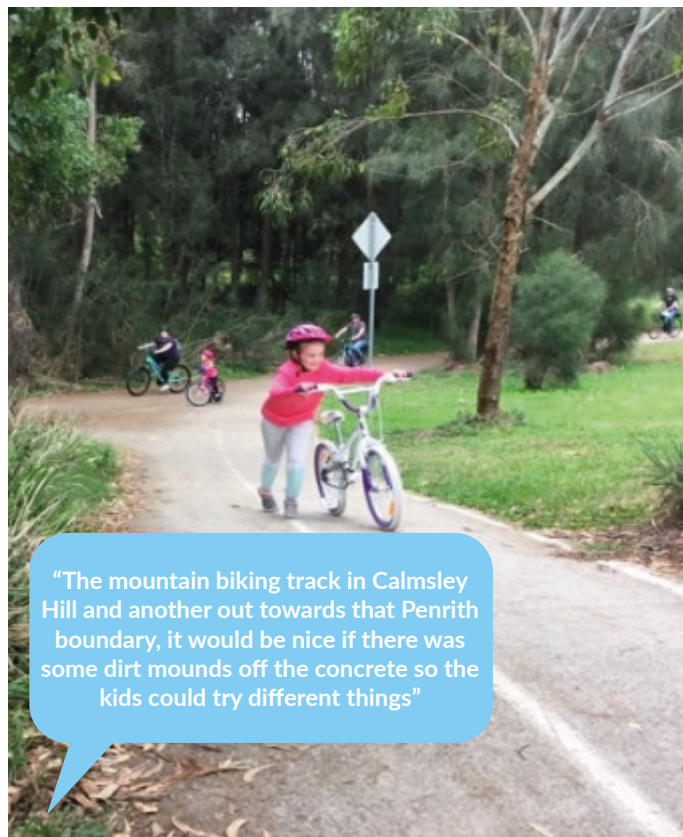
"I use the Orphan School Creek and Clear Paddock Creek walking tracks, particularly recently during Covid-19 as a form of exercise. I have young children, I like to push baby along in the pram, so I like the open space and the ability to walk away from noise and traffic."



"I am a long-time resident, recently using the creek, particularly during of Covid-19, often Orphan School Creek and Clear Paddock Creek. So I do a lot of walking every day and cycling on the weekends sometimes.."

Activity 1 - Love/Change

Focus: shared paths



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Varied and abundant vegetation (4)
- Nature and the natural area (2)
- Ample space for exercising, particularly for two or more people (2)
- Cycle paths and walking tracks (2)

Other comments:

- There is no doubt that the creation of play areas and paths have made a difference to the enjoyment of life
- You can bring your family to the area and feel safe using the area for recreation

What do people want to change?

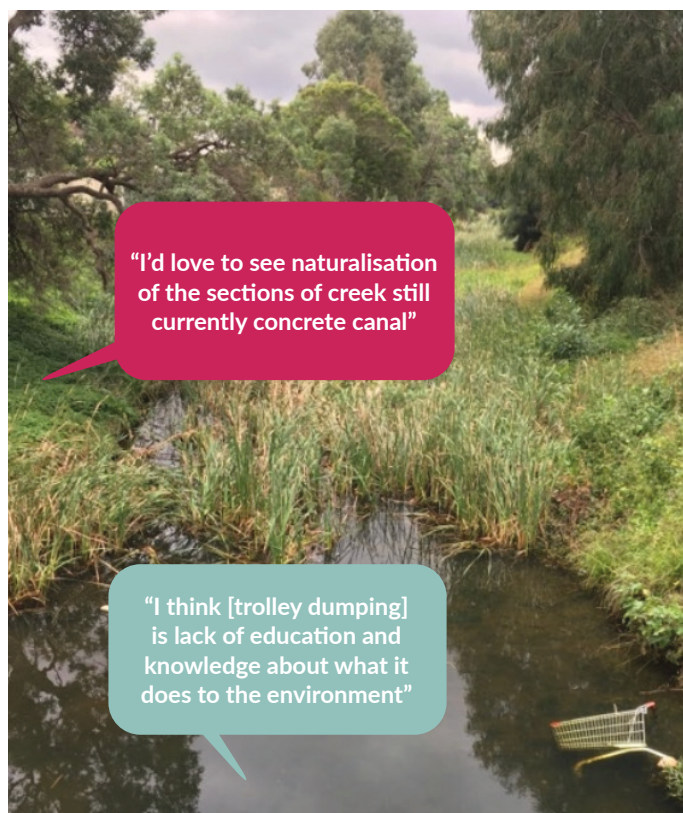
Some common themes:

- Wider and more cycling paths (2)
- Increased lighting (2)
- More indicators and signs

Other comments:

- Enhance existing bicycle paths in certain locations

Focus: nature and pollution



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Natural growth of plants and vegetation (3)
- Naturalisation of creeks and creek lines (2)
- The greenery

Other comments:

- Love this part of the creek, plenty of turtles and bird life

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Reduce littering and rubbish dumping (5)
- Increasing issues with trolley dumping (3)
- Improve maintenance and cleaning of creeks and creek lines, including natural bush areas (4)
- Clearer water to attract natural habitat, both flora and fauna

Other comments:

- Uncertainty around who is responsible for clearing rubbish
- Educational opportunity for primary and secondary students for littering and trolley dumping

Focus: walking and back fences



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Access to pathways within a natural setting (2)
- More foot traffic increases safety (2)
- Dog-friendly footpath
- Native vegetation and habitats
- Greenery

Other comments:

- Access to public spaces is one of the only ways to get vegetation

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Improved and increased lighting, including reflective footpaths or solar lighting (5)
- Improved maintenance of vegetation, particularly to keep paths clear and safe for users (2)
- More Australian native plants and trees to attract native fauna
- More strategically planted trees

Other comments:

- VandalTrak has helped to reduce the amount of graffiti in the area

Focus: seating, paths and playground



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Open and green spaces for recreation, including play, exercise and sports (3)
- Facilities integrated for residents to play and sit (3)
- Shade from trees
- Well maintained
- Bike path connected to play equipment

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Wider paths, with improved line markings (2)
- More equipment, particularly for sports and children's play (2)
- Improved surfacing of pathways, walkers and riders
- Increased shelter and seating, particularly for hotter days
- Additional bubblers and water stations
- Opportunity for community art and sculptures
- Monitor seating for rubbish and graffiti
- Increased lighting around places with a lot of vegetation, as it gets really dark at dusk

Other comments:

- Wider track on Avoca Street

Focus: back fences, housing, pollution, natural areas



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Nature
- Open and not a concrete canal

Other comments:

- There are ways for people to live with creeks but they have to care
- Could be a nice hangout for young children to engage with wildlife

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Improve littering and erosion (4)
- Improve maintenance and cleaning of waters and natural environment (3)

Other comments:

- Concrete canals don't have the natural habitat to sustain the flora and fauna. It's not a good way to fix erosion or flooding.

Focus: pedestrian crossings and nature



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Separation from traffic and safety of the rails (5)
- Bridge for pedestrian access (2)
- Vegetation is better as the roots from the trees will assist with erosion and flooding (2)
- Opportunity for an art feature along the bridge (2)

What do people want to change?

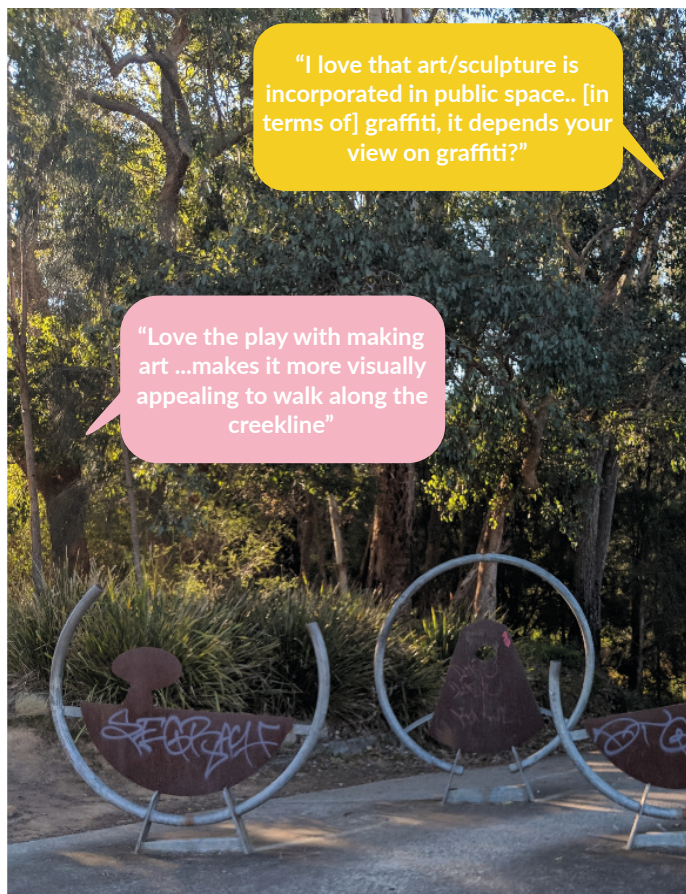
Some common themes:

- Widen the path, and add line markings (2)

Other comments:

- Being too close to cars can be distressing

Focus: public art and wayfinding



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- More art along the creek lines (2)
- Opportunity for more local artists contributions (2)
- Little pieces of architecture and small designs

Other comments:

- There is also a lot of Aboriginal significance along the creek line that could be interpreted (2)
- Love the play with making art and barriers makes it more visually appealing to walk along the creek line
- Depends on how you view graffiti

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Improve littering and erosion (4)
- Improved maintenance and cleaning of waters and natural environment (3)

Other comments:

- Concrete canals don't have the natural habitat to sustain the flora and fauna. It's not a good way to fix erosion or flooding

Focus: creek crossing



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Width of the path
- The bridge
- Relaxing and leisurely environment
- Native plants to encourage wildlife

Other comments:

- Opportunity for a community development project, for example, projects about making bird boxes - to create habitats for birds. Creating boxes helps some parts of the community in keeping constructive, and helps to create housing for birds.

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Opportunity to merge the grassy mown area with the creek line more sympathetically (2)
- Denser vegetation along the creek line to avoid dumping and help with stopping the creek line eroding even more

Focus: fitness equipment and trails



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Exercise equipment (2)
- Mixed use area

Other comments:

- Exercise stations for elderly and good social area for elderly and families

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Fitness equipment needs to be upgraded and maintained (2)
- More variety of exercising equipment
- Increase shading of equipment

Other comments:

- There should be fitness equipment like the ones from Kenguro pro
- Different surfacing, particularly for the soft play area surfacing
- At times more people are sitting on the equipment rather than using it

Focus: seating and paths



What do people love?

Some common themes:

- Seating, particularly facing the creek
- Wider paths

Other comments:

- This is a great interchange meeting point
- I like the proportions of this space

What do people want to change?

Some common themes:

- Additional bubbler or water station, as most people would sit down to rest
- Increase shade, particularly for sunny days

Focus: trees



What do people love?

Other comments:

- Open spaces (2)
- Open spaces to play sport, and other recreational activities
- The avenue of tree plantings

Some other comments:

- I love these trees that were planted a few years ago, they are growing nicely

What do people want to change?

Other comments:

- Opportunity for community gardens (2)
- Additional seating
- Increase use of open spaces
- Increase tree canopy in open, expansive grass areas
- Opportunity for re-vegetation

Some other comments

- Opportunity to grow rice

Activity 2 - What would you like to see in creeks across Fairfield City

Please note, a total of 13 participants took part in the online workshop. However in this activity some participants did not vote, and only suggested comments.



Fences as canvas for art

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
13	0	0

100% of participants like the idea of fences for art along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Incorporates the community and participation, in doing that it encourages the community to participate in a positive way
- Gives people opportunity to express their creativity and to be recognised by the community
- Good for the community.
- Opportunity for school children or others to collaborate to create something similar to these photos
- Avoids vandalism
- Very Instagram worthy people will definitely come out and interact with the space more
- Local = ownership



Creating better access and visibility

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
1	1	11

86% of participants are unsure about creating better access and visibility across creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Unlikely property owners would want to do this (2)
- Depends where in Fairfield it would go
- If it was on Calmsley Hill Farm it would be okay



Community gardens along the creek lines

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
11	0	2

85% of participants like the idea of community gardens along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- It encourages community participation and encourages people to take care of their environment in a positive way
- It is a good activity for children and families
- Having a community garden right next to the creek might not be the best place, could be issues with things running off into the creek
- Vandalism and pollution should be considered
- It would have to be completely organic
- I think there is a case for community gardens but our creeks flood and this has to be taken into account

Other comments include:

- There is a network of people who harvest what is already along the creek lines, including dandelions, edible weeds
- People use to have market gardens along the creeks years ago

Loops and trails

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
10	0	3

77% of participants like the idea of loops and trails along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Yes to existing loops, some loops can show the kilometres walked and kilojoules burned
- Signage that indicates estimated walking and cycling times
- We have enough fitness stations but I would like to see more workout equipment like the Kenguru Pro

Other comments include:

- Some equipment does not get used (2)
- Check out the heat effect of this kind of asset



Focused improvements in some parts instead of spread

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
1	8	3

62% of participants don't like with the idea of focused improvements in some parts instead of spread across creek lines in Fairfield City, and would prefer improvements across the whole network, with some comments including:

- It ought to happen but sustainability has to be the highest consideration (2)
- Currently, some areas are improved better than others, some are overdeveloped with so many different activities. Each area deserves to have some kind of development and improvement.
- Baseline is to have a connected and shared path, and overtime include different activities. There is a danger to keep developing in one area, having all those things in one place leads to crowding
- I think we should use it to improve ecosystems instead of investing in recreation equipment
- Focus on improvements across the network but also upgrading focused spots as key areas
- Allocate improvements all over, particularly the concrete canals, and probably in areas where the walking path and bike track were created 20-30 years ago

Other comments include:

- Basketball courts, other simple outdoor sport facilities

Pedestrian Bridges

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
10	0	0

77% of participants like the idea of pedestrian bridges along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Opportunity for an art feature (2)
- It is more aesthetically pleasing
- Priority is to have more bridges
- Ornate bridges
- Bridges could be named, and become an attraction to the area

Other comments include:

- There would be maintenance costs to this
- Management of these assets is crucial



Cafes and Kiosks

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
8	1	2

62% of participants like the idea of cafes and kiosks featured along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Mobile cafes and kiosks in open space parks (2)
- More mobile cafes and kiosks at different places particularly in key areas. For example, along the creek lines people flock to places like Fairfield park. There are a lot of other pathways that lead to various key spots that would benefit with cafes and kiosks.

Other comments include:

- Could lead to increased littering



Cycling Path

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
10	1	0

77% of participants like the idea of loops and trails along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- More off concrete paths, for mountain bikes
- Wider and connected paths across different areas

Other comments include:

- The mountain biking track in Calmsley Hill and another out towards the Penrith boundary, it would be nice if there was some dirt mounds off the concrete so the kids could try different things



Sheltered picnic areas

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
8	0	3

85% of participants like the idea of sheltered picnic areas along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Encourages more outing time
- Opportunity for BBQ facilities to have a small picnic and family outings

Other comments include:

- This would need improved management for littering and rubbish
- Sheltered picnic areas disrupt nature
- Opportunity for increased surveillance, as there are people loitering around existing sheltered picnic areas



Places to gather

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
4	5	4

39% of participants don't like with the idea of places to gather along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- I like the creeks because it is unserved, untouched and not man-made (3)
- Uncertain about the concrete steps
- Could lead to a lot of pollution if it is not managed well
- Parramatta River has a similar situation, but it removes the natural vibe and elements of the creeks
- There are plenty of places in Fairfield that are social areas, we don't need to make these creeks another social place

Other comments include:

- It encourages social interactions between each other within the community
- This would be great for a city setting



Lights so you can go there at night

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
8	0	4

62% of participants like the idea of light at night along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Opportunity for solar lighting
- Depends on how the lighting is implemented
- Important to consider how lighting might effect wildlife, there needs to be a balance between the natural environment and community health

Other comments include:

- At the moment it feels safe, lots of families and older people visit at night
- What disruption does it cause?



More trees for shade

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
9	0	2

69% of participants like the idea of more trees for shade along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Opportunity for a bush rejuvenation project
- It is important for global warming

Other comments include:

- Leave more space and area for dogs to run around



Signage and information (e.g.: blue dots)

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
8	1	1

62% of participants like the idea of signage and wayfinding along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- This kind of signage helps people who don't have that natural curiosity
- Opportunity to have some signs about vegetation around the area to educate people on what kind of vegetation there is
- For example, in Japan they have calorie counts which is very playful
- Opportunity to have interpretive signs for Aboriginal Heritage
- Opportunity to include Indigenous colours

Other comments include:

- Consider how it is delivered and communicated to the community, with better explanations of what the sign will lead you to
- Stickers along paths deteriorate and become environmentally damaging
- Dots are a visual pollution, signs are better



Natural Crossings

Agree	Disagree	Maybe
9	0	1

69% of participants like the idea of natural crossings along creek lines in Fairfield City, with some comments including:

- Using the natural environment
- Great for children
- The rocks are great
- We have made our own in some places

Other comments include:

- Liability issue (3)