



NOARLUNGA - RENEWAL SA

SCHOOLS ENGAGEMENT REPORT

APRIL 2025



SUMMARY PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

In late 2024, Renewal SA, in collaboration with Clover, engaged young people from Noarlunga Downs Primary School and St John the Apostle School in Christie Downs as part of broader community engagement for the Noarlunga Project's open space elements. Nearly 60 students, aged 9-11, participated in an interactive co-design process to contribute ideas and preferences for the central and eastern reserves.

This engagement aimed to ensure that young people, future users of the site had a voice in shaping the central and eastern reserve design. The process included discussions about the local environment, a visioning exercise, interactive image-based voting, and creative sketching activities.

Key themes from the engagement emphasised the importance of adventure play areas, shaded seating, creeks, and native planting. Students were less supportive of dense housing overlooking green spaces and formal active zones like outdoor fitness areas. This report outlines the significance of engaging young people, details the co-design process, and presents key findings to guide the reserve design.

Why engage young students?

Engaging young students in the design process ensures the reserve meets community needs and reflects the aspirations of future users. Given the site's location near the Onkaparinga River and the beach, it has the potential to become a hub for recreation, learning, and social connection.

By involving students, the project aimed to:

- **Capture fresh perspectives** – Children offer creative ideas that may not emerge in traditional planning processes.
- **Ensure inclusivity** – The needs of different age groups vary, from play spaces for younger children to study and social areas for older students
- **Strengthen environmental awareness** – Discussions about the site's natural context encouraged students to consider sustainability and conservation.
- **Foster community ownership** – Involvement in the design process helps students feel a sense of responsibility and pride in the space.

Involving students in the design process strengthens the community's connection to the site. By making them active participants in shaping the space, we are not only designing but also creating a shared vision for a space that will be enjoyed for generations to come.



Noarlunga Downs Primary School - Exploring Reserve Concepts



Noarlunga Downs Primary School - Exploring Reserve Concepts



Noarlunga Downs Primary School - Sticky dot exercise



Noarlunga Downs Primary School - Sketching Their Favorite Idea or Element



St John the Apostle School - Sticky dot exercise



St John the Apostle School - Project introduction & discussion

CO-DESIGN ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

School Engagement Process

The engagement session was designed to be interactive, encouraging students to explore their connection to nature, identify what was missing in their local area, and contribute creative ideas for the reserve’s design.

Session Outline

1. Project Introduction & Discussion on the Natural Environment

Clover visited the school and presented a brief overview of the upcoming development to the students, providing them with valuable insights into the project’s context and its close proximity to both the river and the ocean. Using a series of plans and precedent images, Clover walked the students through the vision for the central and eastern reserves, illustrating how the space would integrate with its surroundings. This presentation not only helped the students gain a deeper understanding of the project’s background but also encouraged them to share their own thoughts and ideas about the design, fostering an engaging dialogue about the future of the space.

2. Project Exploration and Ideas

- Students were asked:
- Where do you visit to play, explore, walk, or relax?
 - What are your favorite places, and why?
 - What is missing in this area that you would like to do but currently cannot?

This discussion helped students reflect on their experiences and consider how the reserve could enhance their outdoor activities.

3. Sketching Their Favorite Idea or Element (for Noarlunga Downs- Primary school sessions only)

Students used A4 sheets and their own materials (pencils, colored pens, markers) to illustrate their favorite idea for the reserve. This activity encouraged creativity and helped visualise their vision for the space.

4. Exploring the Reserve Concept & Prioritising Features

- Students were introduced to the central and eastern reserves and potential components.
- They were asked: What are your top three priorities for the reserve? (e.g., playground, creek, native plantings, lawn for kickabout, nature play, lookout, etc.)
- To facilitate this, A1 printouts of three precedent Reserve Imagery sheets were placed on tables, with students using sticky dots to indicate preferences:
 - 3 green dots for features they liked
 - 3 red dots for features they disliked

Students then shared their reasoning, explaining why they made their selections.



CO-DESIGN ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engagement Activity 1 - Project Introduction & Discussion on the Natural Environment

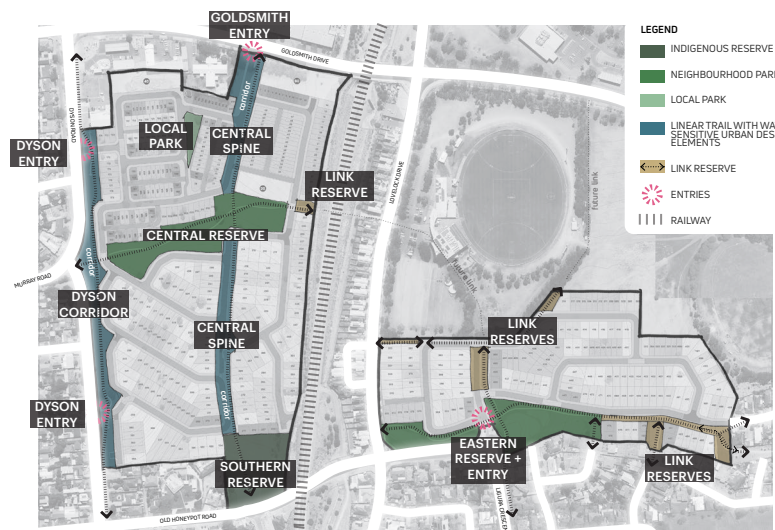
Site Context and Location

The Noarlunga project is a significant urban renewal project located within the City of Onkaparinga, South Australia. Situated near key transport corridors and adjacent to established urban areas, the development aims to create a vibrant, connected, and culturally enriched community. The site is positioned in proximity to the Onkaparinga River, the coast, Colonnades Shopping Centre, and key transport networks, making it an ideal location for residential development. Its position ensures easy access to public transport, including rail and bus services, for both residents and visitors. The development is designed to enhance the local community’s accessibility, walkability, and overall urban experience by integrating green spaces, pedestrian-friendly pathways, and active transport links. The Noarlunga project applies sustainable design, community focus and culturally responsive landscapes to foster connection, active and social interactions, environmental responsibility, and education.

Noarlunga - Stage 1W Open Space Typologies

- Entries
- Dyson Corridor
- Local Park
- Central Reserve
- Southern Reserve
- Central Spine
- Eastern Reserve
- Link Reserves

The engagement aimed to seek feedback and explore ideas for the concepts of the central reserve and the eastern reserve.



Central Reserve - Concept Plan

LEGEND OPTIONS

- Tree grove/ Entrance feature
- Resting/seating zone
- Indigenous garden
- Yarning circle/ Gathering space
- Turf : kick a ball space
- Shelter & picnic setting
- Half Basketball Court
- Market Square : arrival plaza and event area
- Adventure play area: opportunity to create a nature play area for community use
- Sand Play Area
- Outdoor fitness area
- Shelter, BBQ & picnic setting
- Educational Garden
- Dog Park



Eastern Reserve - Concept Plan

LEGEND OPTIONS

- Resting/seating zone
- Indigenous garden
- Turf : kick a ball space
- Shelter & picnic setting
- Outdoor fitness area/Parkour
- Adventure play area: opportunity to create a nature play area for community use
- Gathering space/Cultural zone
- Boardwalk



CO-DESIGN ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engagement Activity 2- Project Exploration and Ideas

St John the Apostle School
Student comments & feedback

What activities do you currently do in the area?

- Fly my plane near to the football oval
- The park near my home to play soccer / footy (AFL) / netball / basketball
- Go to the Jubilee playground
- Climbing trees in the playground near my house – they're awesome
- Dirt jumps for bikes

Noarlunga Down Primary school
Student comments & feedback

What activities do you currently enjoy in the area?

- Go to the beach near grandmas house, mess around
- Visit the walking trails with a friend and play in the sand dunes (along the Onkaparinga river)
- Live close to the area – use the river trail and play hide and seek. Very close to the beach, so they like to visit the beach. Also explore the cliffs
- Seaford rail corridor – likes to watch the trains go by. Looking down from the Seaford rail corridor, they can see the fields and the kangaroos. They enjoy looking at the view
- Can see the Onkaparinga river from their home. Sees a lot of bin chickens (Ibis)
- Uses the bike track through the onkaparinga river, rides their scooter through the track

What do you want to see in the reserve?

Waterfall and a pond

Waterpark play "something to splash in"

Trampolines

Water fountain

Skatepark

Creek

Swings

Café in nature

RC Track (bike and scooter)

Sandpit

Tree climbing

Slide and play tower

Billy Cart Track

Engagement Activity 3 -Sketching Their Favorite Idea or Element

Sketches by Noarlunga Down Primary school students



would love to see a creek with rocks and planting.. and lots of nature play around



would love to see a creek and waterfall.. with some seats and play structure around



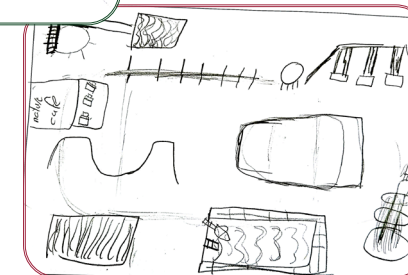
would love to see a big water body with a bridge.. surrounded with trees and rocks



would love to see a huge timber play structure.. with slide and swings and trees around it



would love to see a play structure with play opportunities ... including swings, sand pit, slide and rock climbing



would love to see a climbing structure.. with slide and swings and trees around it

would love to see swings, trampoline, cafe, native cafe.. along with other active zones



CO-DESIGN ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engagement Activity 4- Exploring the Reserve Concept & Prioritising Features

St John the Apostle School
Student comments & feedback

Likes/Dislikes

- Group 1
- Nature play is safe and appropriate for all ages
 - Adventure play – with lots of safe places for little kids but also stuff that older kids can do
 - Likes the market, heaps of trees, and likes how you can walk around
 - Does not like the fitness equipment. “Rather than wasting money on fitness, use the money to make a better play ground as kids are burning as much energy there”

- Group 2
- Likes the Totem Pillar with the Black Cockatoo, it looks nice
 - Does not like the image with the townhouses. It doesn't have too many trees and not enough room to do things. They are small houses
 - Likes the garden, it's a calming space
 - Don't like the birds one – it's plain and there's nothing to do
 - Don't like – too many trees and not much to do. The trees get in the way
 - The market one – because there are lots of trees and lots to play round and look at

- Group 3
- Adventure play, enjoys that there is nature all around. Trees have oxygen – and make you breathe faster
 - Likes the flowers. Enjoys a nice place to sit down and have a picnic
 - Enjoys the idea of a resting place and having a place to rest after a long distance walk
 - Liked the parkour, encourages play and exercise. “Exercising without realising it's exercise”
 - Enjoyed a shared use path, lots to do. You can stroll around, walk along and look at nature
 - The teacher commented after the session that Cliff Avenue Park was not suitable for young ages – having a “ninja warrior” type of set up. It is targeted for older kids, and younger children were not able to suitably utilize the space. She also commented that no one uses the fitness equipment

Noarlunga Down Primary school
Student comments & feedback

Likes/Dislikes

- Group 1
- Like the trees, waterways, path, grasses
 - NO houses
 - Keep playgrounds and recreational activities away from houses because of noise

- Group 2
- No parkour. There are lots of kids such as young kids who aren't able to use the equipment. It's not accessible to everyone
 - Really like outdoors. Outdoor/nature playground was well liked
 - No fitness equipment. “I never see anyone use them” and ‘they are a waste of money”

- Group 3
- Likes the adventure play and parkour – “the parkour is ornamental”
 - Does not like the wood aesthetic. It is too “boring”
 - The space and play equipment needs more vibrancy and colour to enhance the experience and to feel “exciting”



Image from the sticky dot exercise at St John Apostle School



Image from the sticky dot exercise at St John Apostle School



Image from the sticky dot exercise at Noarlunga Downs Primary School



Image from the sticky dot exercise at St John Apostle School



Image from the sticky dot exercise at Noarlunga Downs Primary School



Image from the sticky dot exercise at Noarlunga Downs Primary School

CO-DESIGN ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Key Outcomes & Findings

The engagement process highlighted students' strong preferences for nature-based and inclusive play experiences, while also identifying elements they felt were less suitable for the reserve.

Preferred Features

- **Adventure play areas** – Engaging and imaginative play spaces were highly favored.
- **Shaded seating zones** – Providing comfortable, shaded areas for relaxation and socializing was a priority.
- **Natural elements** – Rocks, logs, creeks, and native plantings were seen as valuable additions.
- **Interactive and educational spaces** – Some students suggested features like water conservation elements or wildlife learning areas.

Elements to Avoid

- **Dense housing overlooking green spaces** – Students felt this would reduce the natural feel and openness.
- **Formal active zones** (e.g., parkour, outdoor fitness areas) – Many felt these were not inclusive for all age groups.
- **Large, empty lawn areas** – Students preferred multifunctional spaces over vast open fields.

The findings from this engagement will help shape the final design of the reserve, ensuring it aligns with the needs, values, and aspirations of future users while also embracing its natural and cultural context.

