

Olympic Leisure Centre activation activities

31 January 2022

This report summarises the consultation findings from the January 2022 Olympic Leisure Centre (OLC) community activation activities.

A range of free community activities were offered over a 20-day period in the Olympic Village precinct, Heidelberg West to test re-development ideas proposed by the Co-Design Team and community through Shaping Banyule and consultation feedback. The purpose was to:

1. Gather community feedback on Council's proposal to remove the aquatics elements from the facility.
2. Gather community feedback on the types of activities that should be accommodated in the new OLC.
3. Assess value of the priority functions proposed for the new OLC.

Over the course of the 20 days, 60 activities were facilitated. The activities included health and fitness classes, outdoor sports, crafts, music, STEM, water play, gardening and cooking.

Indicative figures indicate that between 350-400 people attended. It was noted that people attended multiple activities over the 20 days, many planned to attend, some incidental attended as they moved through the village and others watched from the sidelines.



Key findings

1. With acknowledgement of the COVID constraints, the activities attracted mostly 3081 residents and parents with dependent children. Seniors activities predominately attracted persons from single adult households from outside postcode 3081.
2. Whilst most participants reported they came to have fun, participate in activities and socialise, some were attracted by the activity as they were moving through the Village for other purposes.
3. Feedback from the activation activities suggest people enjoyed the hands-on, practical activities for children and the friendly, relaxed and community-orientated feel. Several commented on missing local activities due to COVID.



4. In addition to many comments about keeping aquatics as a feature of the new facility (especially for children), community posit that casual, local activity and program spaces, indoors and out, are desirable to bring together locals to enjoy more of these types of activities in the future. Child friendly spaces and spaces for young people were mentioned. Natural elements such as community gardens were also mentioned.
5. Community were asked to rate the importance of types of spaces. The current uses were listed as most important, whilst spaces to read and learn were least important.
 - Sport and recreation- 4.6/5
 - Water play/ aquatics- 4.6/5
 - Health and wellbeing- 4.6/5
 - Meet and interact- 4.4/5
 - Create and make- 4.1/5
 - Community gathering spaces- 4.1/5
 - Spaces to read and learn – 3.7/5



6. Community suggested the new facility should also accommodate space for a range of neighbourhood house type activities including crafts, sensory play, dancing, martial arts, yoga, meditation, self-defence, Zumba, theatre classes, preschool music etc.



7. Other comments include large outdoor gathering spaces, water playground, outdoor cinema, coffee shop and a children's library/ book exchange. Malahang was suggested as an alternative space for some outdoor activities.
8. Activity Facilitator feedback provides an additional account of people's participation in activities. This feedback suggests activities attracted generations of families to participate in the activity, and bring people together seemed rally the community to discuss the Olympic Leisure Centre project. The participants were reported to be highly engaged, focused, eager to learn and having fun. Observations suggest people liked spending time with other locals. Some participants, especially in the active sports, had not been involved in organised sports previously.



Conclusions

This test indicates a high level of fidelity between what community says they want and what they will actively participate in, with the caveat being that these activities were free.

Overwhelmingly, the community feedback and conversations through the activation activities indicate the lack of community support for Council's proposal to remove the aquatics function from OLC. The feedback indicates that community miss the pools and seek a local facility that offers swimming lessons.