



Let's
Talk

Botanic Gardens Draft Masterplan 2025

Engagement Report

October 2025



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Executive Summary

In mid-2025, Wollongong City Council invited community feedback on the Botanic Garden Draft Masterplan 2025, following its public exhibition. This engagement aimed to gather insights on proposed developments, including infrastructure upgrades, heritage conservation, and visitor experience enhancements.

Engagement Overview

- 132 submissions were received: 78 via online form, 54 via email/letter.
- Engagement activities included pop-up stalls, drop-in sessions, social media campaigns, and targeted outreach to stakeholders.
- The Our Wollongong engagement website saw over 1,600 visits and over 1,000 document downloads.
- Social media posts reached 25,842+ views, generating 234 interactions and 130 link clicks.

Submissions were received from families with historical ties to the Garden (Woodward and Hoskins), and local groups including:

- Friends of the Wollongong Botanic Garden
- Destination Wollongong
- Illawarra Birders
- Keiraville Residents Action Group
- National Trust (NSW)
- Neighbourhood Forum 5
- Urban Biodiversity Illawarra

These groups broadly supported the Masterplan but offered detailed recommendations, particularly around café location, tourism planning, ecological protection, and heritage preservation.

Key Themes from Feedback

Visitor Centre & Café

- Strong support for a purpose-built, integrated facility near Murphy's Avenue.
- Cratloe Cottage widely viewed as unsuitable due to accessibility and heritage concerns.
- Calls for prioritisation and feasibility studies.

Toilet Facilities

- Existing amenities seen as inadequate.
- Preference for integration with visitor centre rather than standalone blocks.

Accessibility & Parking

- Requests for improved pedestrian access, expanded parking, and better bike facilities.

Playground & Family Facilities

- Desire for inclusive, modern play equipment and shaded seating.

Mercury Five Islands Fountain

- Mixed views: many support restoration; others prefer interpretive signage due to sustainability concerns.

Heritage & Cultural Inclusion

- Strong support for Gleniffer Brae conservation and activation.
- Calls for greater visibility of Aboriginal culture through signage, gardens, and programming.

Environmental & Educational Enhancements

- Support for propagation glasshouse upgrades, Bushcare initiatives, and educational programming.
- Suggestions for music events, workshops, and community gardening.

Tourism Strategy

- Noted absence of a formal strategy - recommended integration with Destination Wollongong.

Next Steps

Council will review all feedback and consider updates to the Masterplan before presenting a final version. Stakeholders and the community will be kept informed via the Our Wollongong website.

The information in this report is based on data collected from community members who chose to be involved in engagement activities and therefore should not be considered representative.

This report is intended to provide a high-level analysis of the most prominent themes and issues. While it's not possible to include all the details of feedback we received, feedback that was relevant to the project has been provided to technical experts for review and consideration.

The analysis of engagement results was assisted by the use of AI technology using de-identified data. All data had been reviewed and de-identified by staff before being input into AI.

Background

The Wollongong Botanic Garden draft Masterplan was first exhibited to the public in 2018 with a strong response from the community (564 submissions). Many respondents were particularly concerned about implications on the Conservatorium of Music that leased buildings in the Garden, and the future of Gleniffer Brae as an important heritage asset.

Council was required to prepare a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for Gleniffer Brae. This, along with various broader issues has caused a delay to the finalisation of the draft Masterplan.

Heritage NSW endorsed the Gleniffer Brae Conservation Management Plan (CMP) in March 2023. With the CMP in place, targeted consultation recommenced in late 2023.

Early this year, Councillors were briefed on the draft Masterplan and the previous feedback from key stakeholders. The draft Masterplan was then finalised and reported to the 30 June 2025 Council meeting, where Council resolved to place it on public exhibition.

This Engagement Report contains an overview of the engagement and the feedback received during the 2025 exhibition period.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders identified prior to the start of the engagement period included:

- Key stakeholder groups.
- The general community of Wollongong.
- Community members with a registered interest in 'Heritage', 'Sport and Recreation', 'Environment', 'Wollongong and surrounds'.
- Businesses and organisations operating nearby and within the Botanic Garden.
- Previously engaged.
- Surrounding residents.
- Community action groups and Neighbourhood Forums.
- Interest and community groups.
- Visitors to the Garden.
- Staff.

Methods

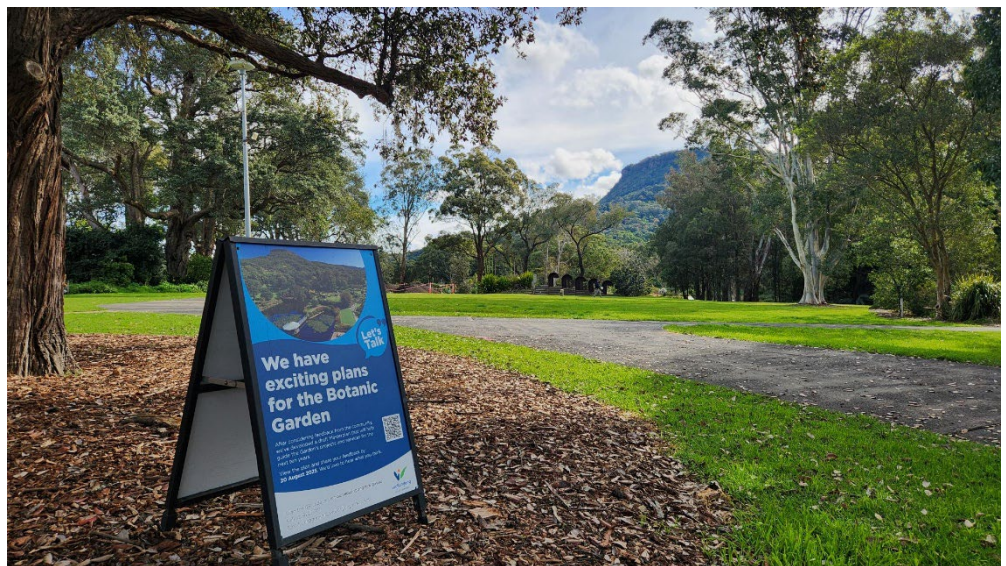
In the lead up to the exhibition period, the project team attended meetings of the following groups (key stakeholders) to present the key project information, listen to members and answer questions:

- Friends of the Wollongong Botanic Garden (ongoing discussions, a presentation to the Executive, and a presentation to the members)
- Neighbourhood Forum 5
- Keiraville Residents Action Group
- The University of Wollongong
- Wollongong Conservatorium of Music (WollCon)

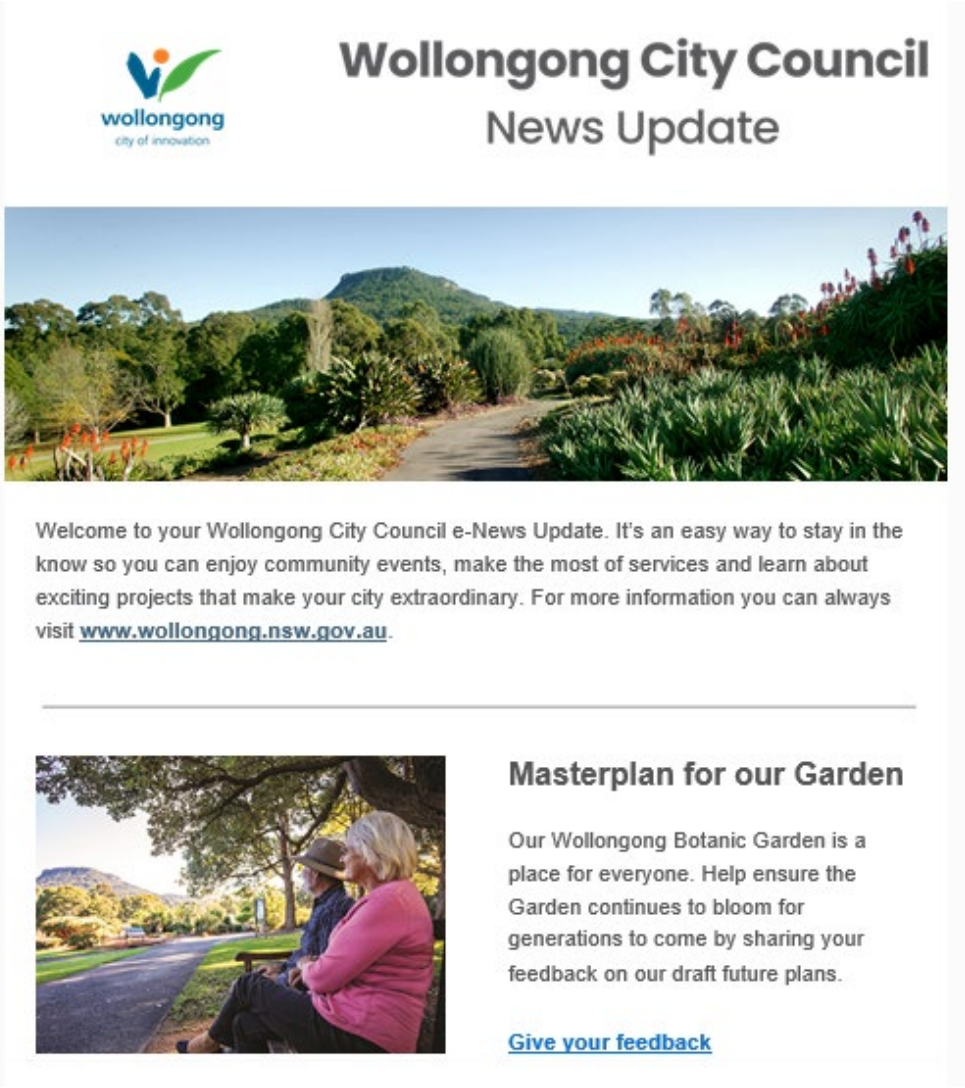
A variety of methods were used to communicate the exhibition to key stakeholders and the community and facilitate engagement.

Table 1: Details of Communication and Engagement Methods

Methods	Details of Methods
Communication Methods	
Emails	Emails were sent to: • Key stakeholders • 2,844 of 'Our Wollongong' engagement website users, which included previously engaged participants as well as registered participants with an interest in 'Heritage', 'Sport and Recreation', 'Environment', 'Wollongong and surrounds' • 73 previously engaged participants (whose submissions were not received via the engagement website)
Letters	Letters were mailed to 137 neighbouring property owners/residents
Our Wollongong website	The project webpage hosted background information and supporting documents: • Draft Masterplan, Draft Masterplan Report, Table of Project Priorities, Gleniffer Brae Conservation Management Plan 2023, Botanic Garden Plan of Management 2020, Council Report and Resolution • Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) • Online survey
Information Packs	Printed (hardcopy) information packs containing the Draft Masterplan, report, FAQs, key project information, posters and postcards were displayed at: • all seven of Wollongong City's libraries • Council's Customer Service Centre • Wollongong Conservatorium • The Botanic Garden's Discovery Centre & Towri Centre
Corflute signs	Corflute signs that included a QR code linking to the Our Wollongong project webpage were installed in key locations throughout the Botanic Garden



Posters	Posters were displayed throughout the Botanic Garden
Postcard flyers	Postcards were made available at key sites throughout the Garden and handed out at pop-up stalls
Pop-up information stalls	The exhibition was promoted and information handed out at two engagement stalls: • Let's Talk North Wollongong pop-up, 18 July 2025, 8am to 10am • Wollongong Central, Waste Education pop-up, 8 August 2025, 10am to 2pm

	(Unfortunately, a Let's Talk Gwynneville pop-up scheduled for Wisemans Park on 2 August 2025 was cancelled due to extremely wet weather.)
Media release	A media release about the exhibition was distributed on 17 July 2025: Wollongong Botanic Garden Masterplan now on exhibition
E-newsletter	An article promoting the exhibition was published in the City of Wollongong's E-News update on 25 July 2025.  Masterplan for our Garden Our Wollongong Botanic Garden is a place for everyone. Help ensure the Garden continues to bloom for generations to come by sharing your feedback on our draft future plans. Give your feedback
Social media	The exhibition was promoted across both the Botanic Garden and Council's (City of Wollongong) Facebook and Instagram pages during the engagement period. 18 July 2025: Both City of Wollongong and Wollongong Botanic Gardens published posts on Instagram to promote the exhibition and the plant sale pop-up.



wollongongcity and wollongongbotanicgarden

wollongongcity Whether you visit for a peaceful stroll, a family picnic, or a school excursion, the Garden is a place for everyone – and now's your chance to help shape its future. 🌱 A draft 10-year Masterplan for our beloved Wollongong Botanic Garden is now on public exhibition and we want to hear from you. From the renewal of Glennifer Brae Manor House, the Kawasaki Bridge, and the Glasshouse, to long-term improvements across the Garden, this plan will guide how we care for and grow one of our city's most treasured spaces. 🌿

💚 Help make sure the Botanic Garden continues to bloom for generations to come
📅 View the draft Masterplan from 17 July to 20 August 2025 and have your say at via the "Our Wollongong" link in bio.

4w

bohmerstrecare One of our favourite family spots. ❤️

1w · 2 likes · Reply

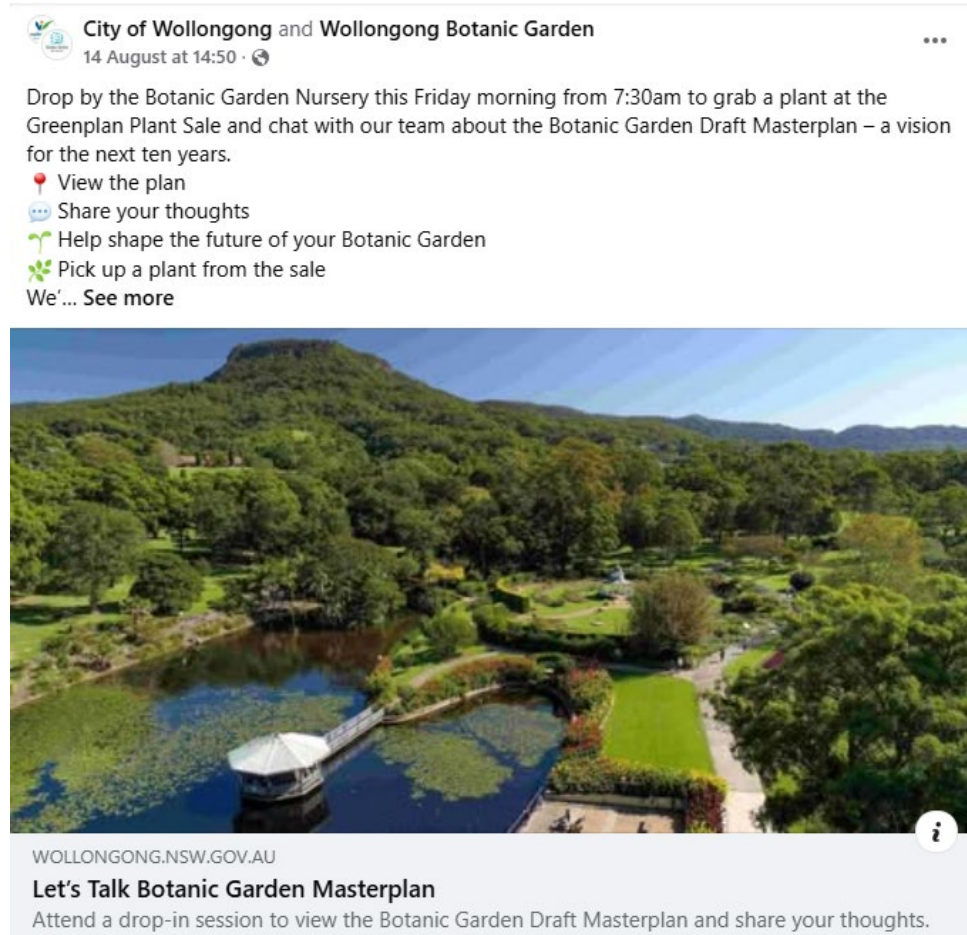
18 July 2025: Both **City of Wollongong** and **Wollongong Botanic** Gardens published posts on **Facebook** to promote the exhibition and the plant sale pop-up.

City of Wollongong and Wollongong Botanic Garden
18 July · 🌐

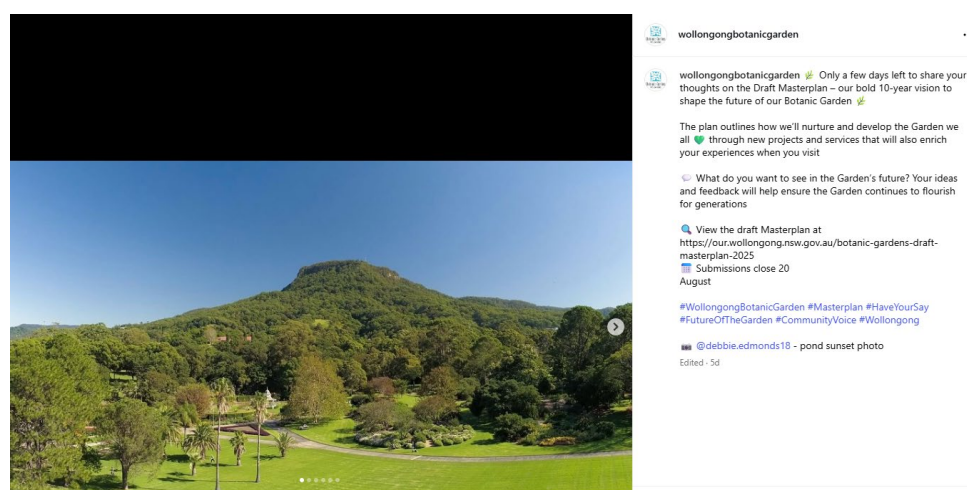
Whether you visit for a peaceful stroll, a family picnic, or a school excursion, the Garden is a place for everyone – and now's your chance to help shape its future. 🌱 A draft 10-year Masterplan for our beloved Wollongong Botanic Garden is now on public exhibition and we want to hear from you. From the renewal of Glennifer Brae Manor House, the Kawasaki Bridge, and the Glasshouse, to long-term improvements across the Garden, this plan will guide how we care for and grow one o...

[See more](#)

14 August 2025: Both **City of Wollongong** and **Wollongong Botanic Gardens** published posts to **Facebook** to promote the exhibition and the plant sale pop-up.



16 August 2025: Both **City of Wollongong** and **Wollongong Botanic Gardens** published posts on **Instagram** to promote the exhibition and the plant sale pop-up.



16 August 2025: **Wollongong Botanic Gardens** published a post on **Facebook** to promote the exhibition.



Wollongong Botanic Garden

Published by Instagram · 16 August at 13:07 · 🌐

...

🌿 Only a few days left to share your thoughts on the Draft Masterplan – our bold 10-year vision to shape the future of our Botanic Garden 🌿

The plan outlines how we'll nurture and develop the Garden we all ❤️ through new projects and services that will also enrich your experiences when you visit

💬 What do you want to see in the Garden's future? Your ideas and feedback will help ensure the Garden continues to flourish for generations

🔍 ... See more



Engagement Methods

Our Wollongong website	An online feedback form was used to capture participants' comments.
Phone calls	A summary of open feedback was noted during phone conversations.
Email	People emailed in open written submissions.
Letter	People posted in open written submissions.
Drop-in session	A drop-in session was held at the Botanic Garden's GreenPlan Plant Sale on 15 August 2025, from 7.30am to 2pm. Key project team members were available throughout the session to discuss the plans and answer questions.

Results

All stakeholders and the wider community were invited to provide feedback on the Botanic Garden Draft Masterplan 2025.

Social Media

Some stakeholders promoted the public exhibition via their social media profiles/channels (providing a balanced summary of social media coverage and commentary is beyond the scope of this report).

Council ran a successful social media campaign across multiple pages and platforms to promote the exhibition, which resulted in over 25,842 views, 234 interactions and 130 link clicks. The following table shows the results.

Date	Posted by	Channel	Results
18 July 2025	City of Wollongong & Wollongong Botanic Gardens	Instagram	Over 3,700 views 61 interactions
18 July 2025	City of Wollongong & Wollongong Botanic Gardens	Facebook	Over 9,400 views 52 interactions 67 link clicks
14 August 2025	City of Wollongong & Wollongong Botanic Gardens	Facebook	3,825 views, 20 reactions
16 August 2025	City of Wollongong & Wollongong Botanic Gardens	Instagram	1,784 views 64 interactions
16 August 2025	Wollongong Botanic Gardens	Facebook	7,133 views 57 interactions 63 link clicks
TOTAL			25,842+ views, 234 interactions and 130 link clicks

Media

The exhibition was well publicised by a variety of media organisations. The following table summarised the news stories published around the public exhibition period.

Date	Media Organisation & Journalist/Program	Headline/description
1 July	ABC Illawarra Wollongong, Breakfast with Melinda James	We'll take a look through all that happened at the Wollongong City Council meeting last night, They talked about... the future of the Botanic Gardens...
1 July	ABC Illawarra Wollongong, News Bulletin	Council has released its 10 year plan for...the local botanic gardens...development of a cafe at the gardens education centre...The document also

		proposes integrating the state heritage listed item Gleniffer Brae...with the rest of the botanic...
1 July	The Illawarra Flame, Jeremy Lasek	After decades of waiting, a cafe and visitors centre is a step closer for Wollongong Botanic Garden
3 July	Illawarra Mercury, Glen Humphries	Future plans for Wollongong Botanic Garden entry
4 July	Illawarra Mercury, Glen Humphries	More could be done at garden entrance
12 July	Region Illawarra, Zoe Cartwright	What changes would you make to Wollongong Botanic Garden?
14 July	Ten Wollongong, Ten News Afternoon	In other news - the embattled Kawasaki Bridge in the Wollongong Botanic Gardens will re-open again soon. Council has labelled repair works on the structure as a priority job...
14 July	Illawarra Mercury, Glen Humphries	What's the plan with botanic garden's long-closed bridge?
3 Aug	The Illawarra Flame, Jeremy Lasek	Council warned they're making 'a terrible mistake' locating a new Botanic Garden cafe in an asbestos-riddled historic cottage
5 Aug	The Illawarra Flame, Jeremy Lasek	Does Council's Botanic Garden masterplan spell the end for Wollongong's magnificent Mercury Five Islands Fountain?
11 Aug	The Illawarra Flame, Jeremy Lasek	Family of famous fountain designer don't want it left high and dry
13 Aug	The Illawarra Flame, Jeremy Lasek	Report puts a price on the restoration of our Mercury Five Islands Fountain
17 Aug	The Illawarra Flame, Jeremy Lasek	Who cares about the famous Mercury Five Islands Fountain? Our councillors have their say
21 Aug	The Illawarra Flame, Jeremy Lasek	Mercury's gift should be our crowning glory

Engagement Website

The engagement website received solid visitation during the exhibition period as detailed below.

Measurable	Numbers
Visits	
Engagement webpage visits	1,601 visits by 1,365 visitors
FAQs	86 times
Document Downloads	
Draft Masterplan (landscape plan)	603 times

Draft Masterplan Report	210 times
Table of Project Priorities	185 times
Gleniffer Brae Conservation Management Plan 2023	17 times
Botanic Garden Plan of Management 2020	4 times

E-newsletter

The 25 July e-newsletter was sent to 3,325 people and the article received 64 link clicks.

Engagement Participation

This section provides details on the participation in engagement activities and feedback received during the exhibition period. The following table details the number of participants for each engagement activity.

Engagement Activities	Participation
Emails	51
Letter	3
Information stalls: - Let's Talk North Beach pop-up, 18 July 2025, 8-10am - Waste Education pop-up, Wollongong Central, 8 August 2025, 10am - 2pm	
Drop-in session: Botanic Gardens GreenPlan Plant Sale, 15 August 2025, 7.30am - 2pm	Approx. 30
Online participation: - Aware - total number of people who viewed the project webpage - Informed - total number of people who clicked a hyperlink, e.g., to download the draft plans. - Engaged - total number of people who actively contributed to the project, e.g., by submitting comments via the survey or posting a question to the Question & Answer (Q&A) section.	1,365 aware 712 informed 78 submissions (from 75 people)

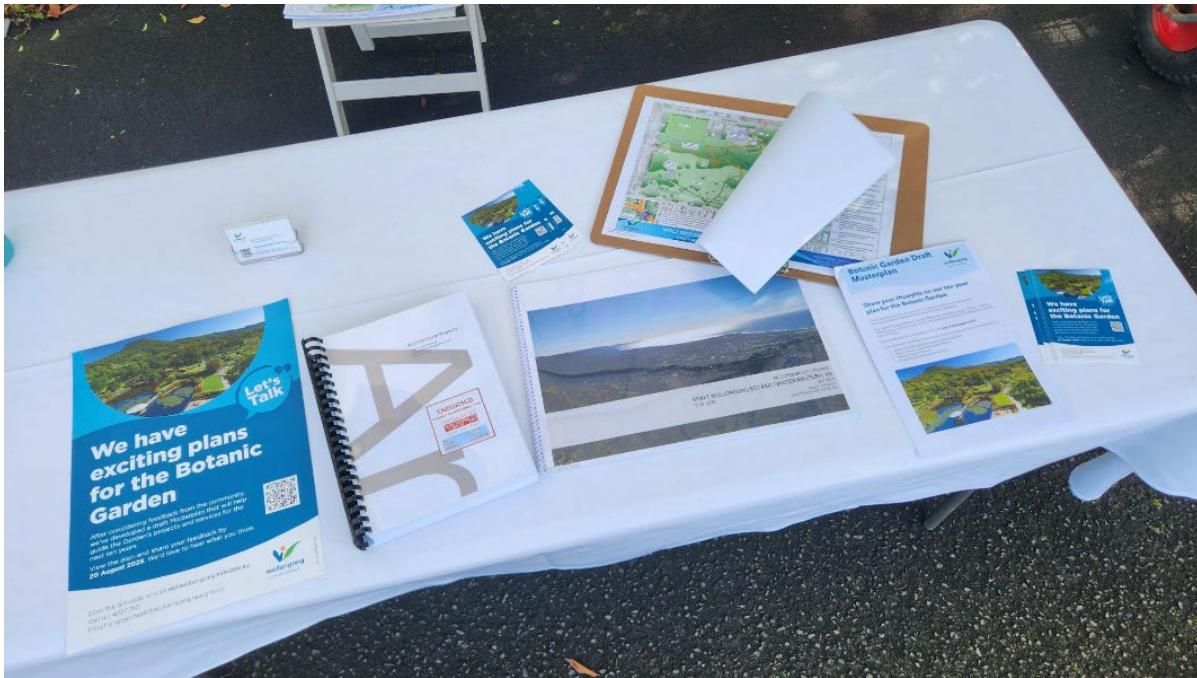


Image: Materials available to be viewed at drop-in session

Submission Results

There were 132 submissions in total – 78 were received via the online feedback form and 54 from emails and letter.

Overall, the feedback was overwhelmingly supportive of the draft Masterplan's intent, with strong community appreciation for the Garden as a valued public asset. The feedback reflects deep community ownership of the Gardens. Many submissions were well-informed and highly detailed – covering many aspects of the plan with great detail, referencing past plans, giving architectural proposals, and acknowledging operational realities.

There was clear and consistent advocacy for several key improvements, particularly around visitor amenities, accessibility, and cultural inclusion. There was also a clear desire for a long-term vision, especially regarding infrastructure investment and prioritisation.

Key Themes

The key themes identified are summarised below.

Café and Visitor Centre

Advocacy for a café and visitor centre was the most dominant theme across submissions. There was widespread agreement that a café and visitor centre are essential for the garden. Many respondents note that most other botanic gardens have these facilities. Some commented that visitors frequently ask where they can get coffee or refreshments. It was expressed with high frequency that a café is seen as a way to encourage longer visits and improve the overall experience.

There was strong support for a purpose-built, integrated visitor centre. Including features such as a café, restaurant or tea house, toilets, gift shop and interpretive displays.

Participants suggested the café and visitor centre could:

- Serve as a tourism hub with information about Wollongong and local attractions
- Host events, meetings, and educational programs
- Sell gifts, souvenirs, and native plants
- Provide shelter during bad weather
- Provide a revenue-generating opportunity and a way to attract interstate and international visitors.

Ideas for design include:

- Glasshouse or greenhouse-style café
- Large windows and outdoor seating
- Sustainable features such as solar power and rainwater harvesting

Location:

The Murphys Avenue entrance was widely suggested as the best location for a café/visitor centre due to the sites:

- Proximity to the popular playground and duck pond
- Distance and steep incline from main entrance
- Accessibility and parking.

Cratloe Cottage was broadly criticised as a suitable location due to:

- Accessibility issues (steep incline, poor accessibility for prams and wheelchairs)
- Limited parking
- Structural limitations (asbestos, layout).
- Heritage value as an educational space.

Timeline and priorities:

- Many expressed frustrations with the proposed timeline of 2–5 years for a café.
- Many called for Council to prioritise the café and visitor centre over standalone toilet block construction.
- Some recommended Council conduct a feasibility study immediately, considering multiple locations rather than focusing only on Cratloe Cottage.
- Some participants referenced past plans dating back to the 1970s and Glenn Murcutt's 1984 design for a tea house and visitor centre.
- Disappointment that previous proposals were never implemented despite strong community support.

Alternative ideas and concerns:

- Some suggest low-key café or kiosk operations as an interim measure.
- Concerns about reliance on commercial operators for Cratloe Cottage and potential impact on educational programs.
- Emphasis on ensuring accessibility.

A submission was received that analysed and assessed four potential sites, and concluded that Iconic Vista #10 and the former Glenn Murcutt sites are most feasible for

a café/visitor information centre. The submission also included illustrations and a concept plan.

Cratloe Cottage

- Widely preferred to remain an educational hub, not repurposed as a café.

Toilet Facilities

- Existing toilets described as outdated and inadequate.
- Opposition to placing a new toilet block at the main entrance, citing visual impact on iconic vistas and visitor's first impressions.
- Preference for toilets to be integrated into a visitor centre or placed near high-use areas like the playground.

Parking and Access

Parking was raised as a major concern of participants, especially during university sessions. Requests were received for:

- Expanded 2-hour parking zones
- Dedicated bus parking
- Improved pedestrian access (e.g., raised crossings, signage)
- Better bike parking.

Playground Upgrades

Multiple submissions highlight the playground as dated and lacking inclusivity.

Suggestions include:

- All-abilities equipment
- Water play features
- Sensory gardens
- Better seating and shade for carers.

Mercury Five Islands Fountain

Many participants provided feedback on the Mercury Fountain. The feedback was polarising. Many expressed they would like it restored and operational as a cultural icon, while others suggested interpretive signage only, citing sustainability concerns. A few proposed it be relocated to a more prominent city location.

Summary of feedback:

- Many respondents support restoring the fountain to working condition, even if only part-time or seasonally.
- There was strong sentiment that the fountain has been neglected and deserves better care and recognition. Some respondents believe the fountain could be a tourist drawcard and a source of civic pride.
- There were calls for a new engineering report to assess feasibility and costs of restoration.
- Many expressed they see the fountain as a significant historical and artistic landmark.
- Some suggested relocating the fountain to a more prominent or accessible location, such as the city centre or Osborne Park.

- Some comments express concern about water and energy use, especially in the context of climate change.
- Suggestions include using solar power, water recycling systems, and wind sensors to make operation more sustainable.
- Several people propose public fundraising or partnerships to support restoration costs.
- Some respondents oppose interpretive signage as a substitute for restoration, preferring minimal signage.
- Some participants suggested the fountain is not a priority and that resources should be directed to other garden features like the bridge or glasshouse. A few respondents advocate for investment in horticulture and staffing over fountain restoration.
- One submission recommends prioritising other water stories in the garden and our civic space, such as the stream from Mount Keira and the Gurangaty Water Place fountain.
- Concern was raised about the impact of fountain operation on nearby plantings, such as rare cycads.

Kawasaki Bridge

- Many expressed gratitude that the bridge was included in the priorities. It was widely supported for urgent restoration by these participants.
- Seen as a symbolic and aesthetic asset, especially for photo opportunities and cultural ties.

Propagation Glasshouse & Nursery

Strong support for early prioritisation of upgrades. Recognised as essential infrastructure for:

- GreenPlan
- Bushcare
- Conservation
- Education.

Tourism Strategy

Many noted the absence of a formal tourism strategy in the draft Masterplan.

- Community sees potential for:
 - Increased visitation
 - Economic benefits
 - Cultural programming
 - Partnerships with Destination Wollongong.

Cultural Inclusion

- Strong desire for local Aboriginal culture to be more visible and celebrated.
- Suggestions include:
 - Bush tucker gardens
 - Weaving circles
 - Interpretive signage
 - Collaboration with local First Nations groups.

Duck Pond

Many respondents expressed strong support for restoring the duck pond, referencing its importance as a beloved feature for families and children. The pond was described as a central attraction, especially for young visitors who enjoy feeding ducks. The pond was recognised by many as a habitat for birds, amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic insects, reinforcing its ecological significance. Some felt the pond's restoration should be a short-term priority, not delayed to the mid-term or long-term stages of the Masterplan.

Several submissions raised concerns about silt build-up, poor water quality, and the need for aeration and filtration systems. Suggestions included:

- Installing plant-based filtration zones
- Investigating runoff and sediment control
- Ensuring safe water for wildlife and potential irrigation

Wollongong Conservatorium of Music

Many participants made comments relating to the Conservatorium, as summarised below.

Access and connectivity

There were multiple calls to improve the physical and functional access between the lower gardens and the Conservatorium (and/or the Gleniffer Brae precinct) as well as interpretive connections. Suggestions included:

- A path linking the lower section of the garden with Gleniffer Brae to improve public access.
- Sealed road access between Gleniffer Brae and the lower Botanic Garden to encourage exploration (or link path from Braeside Avenue gates to Gleniffer Brae).
- Improved pedestrian access for people with limited mobility.
- Improved signage and enhanced visibility

Tourism and cultural activation

Some submissions proposed that the Conservatorium could play a stronger role in tourism and cultural programming within the gardens. Ideas included:

- Hosting recitals or performances as part of a broader activation strategy.
- Using Gleniffer Brae and the Conservatorium as venues for weddings, functions, and cultural events.
- Collaborating with the Conservatorium to increase the tourism potential of the precinct.

Integration in the masterplan

Several submissions expressed concern that the draft Masterplan does not adequately incorporate the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music, despite its location within the Gleniffer Brae precinct and its active use by the community.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Some participants suggested collaborative programming between the Garden and the Con, such as:

- Music performances in the Gardens
- Use of shared spaces for events
- Integration into a future Visitor Centre or cultural hub

Gleniffer Brae

Many participants expressed positive feedback on the current heritage renewal works and carriageway improvements and strong support for conservation and repair of the Gleniffer Brae Manor House. Broadly, the sentiment of these participants was that maintenance should be a top priority at Gleniffer Brae and that modern restoration should take place while respecting heritage values.

Feedback summary:

- Some called to activate Gleniffer Brae as a tourist attraction and improve public access.
- Some requested Council allow use of Gleniffer Brae for weddings and special events, as in the past, or cultural activities, art residencies, and fine dining.
- Some advocated for recognition of the Hoskins family's contribution to the Illawarra and the history of Gleniffer Brae and expressed interest in creating a memorabilia display about the Hoskins family and their role in the steelworks and Botanic Garden development.
- Comparisons made to other heritage properties like Calthorpe's House in Canberra, highlighting Gleniffer Brae's significance.
- One suggestion to restore the original tennis court as part of preserving social history.
- A request for removal of coral trees and revegetation of the southern verge near the two-story Con building, and enable more grassland understory species to grow in pockets around the Con.

Dogs

A few participants advocated for greater inclusion of dog-friendly access. Suggestions were moderate and practical, focusing on on-leash access and designated areas, and it was recognised this would need to be balanced with environmental sensitivity. Benchmarking against other botanic gardens (e.g. Wagga, Melbourne) was used to support the case.

Submissions from families with connections to the Garden

Woodward Family

The family of Robert Woodward, designer of the Mercury Five Islands Fountain, provided a submission which is summarised below (see Appendix 1 for full submission):

- Displeased with current state of fountain.
- Requesting refurbishment - the family urges the Council to fully refurbish the fountain to its original working condition.
- No action - the family commissioned a specialist engineering report in 2017 to support Council's budgeting, but no action has followed.

- Masterplan concerns - the draft masterplan proposes only interpretative signage, which the family views as an inadequate response to a significant civic gift.
- Historical significance - Robert Woodward designed the fountain specifically for Wollongong, symbolising the five islands, surf coast, and local industry.
- Design - the fountain's waterplay element was central to its design, and its restoration would revive its intended movement, light, and sound.
- Offer of support - the family is willing to assist Council in efforts to renew the fountain.

Hoskins Family

Two responses were received from members of the Hoskins family. Gleniffer Brae was built in 1938 by 'Madge and Sid' Hoskins and was used as their family home. Arthur Sidney Hoskins ('Sid') is credited with established the steel making industry in Wollongong. In the early 1950s, the Hoskins family dedicated a large part of their estate to Wollongong City Council to be used to develop a Botanic Garden for the city. Council later acquired the house and surrounds including the Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS) campus, which is occupied by the Wollongong Conservatorium.

The two family members who provided submissions have maintained a strong connection to the Botanic Garden, one being the current Patron of the Friends of the Wollongong Botanic Garden, and the other the husband of the late, former Patron.

Key points

- General Support and Appreciation

Both submitters commend Council for the quality and comprehensiveness of the Draft Masterplan. Both submissions express strong alignment with the Friends of the Wollongong Botanic Garden's recommendations and praised the Friends for their long-standing contributions and advocacy.

They view the Draft Masterplan as a valuable and thoughtful document that has stimulated meaningful community discussion, and both expressed a desire to remain engaged in the planning process and contribute to the Garden's future success.

- Support for a purpose-built Visitor Information Centre (VIC):

Both submissions strongly support the development of a dedicated VIC that includes visitor information services, café and kitchen, gift shop, public toilets, and a multi-functional space for education and community use.

They contend that such a facility would enhance the visitor experience, support tourism, and align with best practices in other regional and city gardens.

It was suggested the VIC could be developed in stages but requires upfront architectural planning.

Both questioned why this is not already a priority in the draft Masterplan and suggest that funding could be sourced through community fundraising or external support.

- Oppose converting Cratloe Cottage into a café

Both agreed that Cratloe Cottage is unsuitable for commercial use due to its location, layout, and heritage value. They support retaining it as an educational centre, especially for curriculum-based programs and indoor learning needs.

- Funding and Vision

Both submissions acknowledge financial constraints but advocate for bold, long-term planning. They suggest that a well-promoted VIC project could attract community donations and broader support. It was suggested there be a dedicated fund to support both capital works and ongoing maintenance.

Submissions from groups and organisations

Seven submissions were received from interested local groups and organisations, including:

- Friends of the Wollongong Botanic Garden
- Destination Wollongong
- Illawarra Birders
- Keiraville Residents Action Group
- National Trust of Australia (NSW) – Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch
- Neighbourhood Forum 5
- Urban Biodiversity Illawarra

The project team met separately with both the University of Wollongong and the Wollongong Conservatorium leading into the exhibition to present the draft Masterplan. No issues were raised by either stakeholder (no submissions were received).

The submissions received from groups and organisations are attached in full as appendices and summarised below.

Friends of the Wollongong Botanic Garden (FWBG)

The Friends group has supported the garden since 1981, contributing over 4,600 volunteer hours in 2024 and allocating \$90,000 to garden projects in 2025. They play a key role in events, tours, and community engagement. Their key points were:

Visitor information centre and café

- Strong support for a purpose-built, integrated Visitor Information Centre, café, toilet block, gift shop and workspace.
- Should be designed for staged construction and located near the Murphy's Avenue entrance.
- Reverse the decision to locate and build a new toilet block just inside the main entry, and delay building toilet in any location until VIC/café planning is complete.
- Cratloe Cottage is unsuitable for a cafe due to poor access, limited parking, structural issues (including asbestos), and impractical layout.
- Recommend retaining Cratloe Cottage for educational use and oppose funding a feasibility study for its conversion. Questioned the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of repurposing existing buildings over new builds, citing other Council projects as precedent.

Tourism strategy

- The draft masterplan lacks a tourism strategy despite aiming to increase visitation from 340,000 to 500,000.
- A tourism strategy and business plan should be developed and integrated with the VIC/café proposal.

Additional comments

- Supportive of upgrades to many masterplan elements including Joseph Banks glasshouse renewal, and propagation glasshouse and depot, Gleniffer Brae heritage works and carriageway access, Kawasaki Bridge restoration, duck pond water quality and silt investigation, rainforest aerial walk, and Northfields Avenue accessible entry.
- Parking concerns - recommend extending two-hour parking on Murphy's Avenue.

See Appendix 2 for full submission.

Destination Wollongong

- Focused on tourism and commercial opportunities.
- Support commercial nature-based attractions such as treetop adventure park.
- Advocated for high-quality, licensed café as central hub, possibly at Cratloe Cottage.
- Promoted Indigenous tourism experiences including bush tucker tours and cultural activities.
- Encouraged tailored group tours and coach-friendly infrastructure.
- Supported opening Gleniffer Brae and upgrading amphitheatre for events.
- Recommended expanding buggy tours and aligning with cruise market.
- Highlighted need to address parking constraints to support increased visitation.

See Appendix 3 for full submission.

Illawarra Birders

- Supportive in principle with ecological recommendations.
- Suggested planting indigenous rainforest species to improve connectivity with Mt Keira.
- Recommended relocating the amphitheatre due to poor access and impact on nocturnal wildlife.
- Emphasised protection of mature Turpentine trees in the Woodland Garden.
- Advocated for lake depth increase and silt trap installation.
- Suggested clustered tree planting near Gleniffer Brae to deter Noisy Miners.
- Recommend all-weather circular track, interpretive signage, and bird hide at Korrongulla Wetland.

See Appendix 4 for full submission.

Keiraville Residents Action Group (KRAG)

- Supportive with key amendments.
- Recommended retaining and refurbishing Cratloe Cottage as an indoor educational hub.
- Advocated for development of a Visitor Centre and Café within a structured tourism strategy.
- Proposed opening Gleniffer Brae to the public to showcase its historical significance.
- Suggested sustainable restoration of the Five Islands Mercury Fountain.
- Called for improved access and parking, and promotion of alternative transport.

See Appendix 5 for full submission.

National Trust of Australia (NSW) - Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch

- Generally supportive with heritage-focused concerns.
- Emphasised preservation of significant view lines to and from Gleniffer Brae and throughout the Garden.
- Raised concerns about amphitheatre activation and its impact on wildlife and cultural landscape.
- Recommended café location on the Garden's perimeter with minimal visual impact.
- Advocated for conservation of Gleniffer Brae carriageway.
- Highlighted need for weed management and bush escape prevention.

- Suggested enhancing bush corridor connectivity without compromising native integrity.

See Appendix 6 for full submission.

Neighbourhood Forum 5 (NF5)

- Supportive with detailed recommendations.
- Called for urgent planning of a Multi-Purpose Facility (MPF) including VIC, café, toilets, and workspaces.
- Opposed feasibility studies for Cratloe Cottage café; prefer retaining it for education.
- Recommended advancing parking upgrades on Murphy's Avenue.
- Supported Mercury Fountain restoration with feasibility studies and sponsorship.
- Advocated for integrated Tourism Strategy and Business Plan.
- Endorsed Kawasaki Bridge renewal and footpath upgrades.
- Requested clarification of project priorities and funding alignment. Provided a table showing their level of agreement with priorities and their suggested changes and actions.

See Appendix 7 for full submission.

Urban Biodiversity Illawarra (UBI)

- Commended Council's efforts but raise ecological and strategic concerns.
- Criticised infrastructure-focused approach and call for alignment with BGCI accreditation.
- Highlight lack of integration and public information on collections.
- Advocate for greater emphasis on threatened ecological communities.
- Support planting indigenous species and enhancing local biodiversity.
- Opposed excessive commercialism; support café only if aligned with conservation goals.
- Recommended increased funding for educational and community engagement activities.
- Suggested improved connectivity including potential for slow bike paths.
- Emphasised importance of Aboriginal cultural heritage and recommend its central inclusion.

See Appendix 8 for full submission.

Additional data

78 responses were received via the online feedback form, and in addition to asking for their feedback on the draft masterplan, we asked participants to voluntarily answer several further questions, seeking their:

- Ideas for community-oriented and commercial activities they'd like to see at the Garden.
- Awareness of the Garden's monthly Greenplan native plant sales.
- Frequency of visiting the Garden and who they visit with.
- Favourite areas to visit.
- Age and where they live.

The results were as follows.

Question: Do you have any ideas for community-oriented activities you'd like to see at the Botanic Garden?

64 of the 78 online respondents provided ideas via this question. The key themes identified are summarised below.

Music and performance

Many participants suggestions centred around music and performances. Ideas included:

- Buskers and student performances
- Outdoor concerts and theatre
- Monthly band events
- Collaborate with the Conservatorium of Music its students and musicians
- Activating Gleniffer Brae for performances
- Use the amphitheatre or the lawned area with platform stage

Hospitality - café/visitor centre

Many participants suggested developing greater food and beverage options and establishing a visitor centre with ideas such as:

- A café, tearoom, or restaurant
- Visitor centre with gift shop, space and facilities for community activities like workshops and exhibitions
- Catered picnics
- Weddings

Children and family activities

- Affordable school holiday programs - a few participants commented on the cost of current activities and emphasised the importance of affordability
- Playgroups and preschool events
- Nature/adventure playground
- Play space with material/plants for children to create their own garden
- Book Week and Children's Week events
- Collaborations with the Library and their events and activities

- Family picnics, picnic events

Education and workshops

Around a third of respondents' ideas related to education and/or workshops, such as:

- Cultivation demos, workshops,
- night walks, talks, art tours
- Indigenous plant education
- Composting and worm farming
- Guided tours and school excursions
- Enhance the structured education program by upgrade Cratloe Cottage and include technology integration

Environmental and gardening

Around a third of respondents' ideas related to environmental and gardening ideas, such as:

- Volunteer support for horticulturalists
- Weed control initiatives
- Native bush food classes, and
- Community gardening and propagation workshops.

Community events and social

Slightly less than a third of respondents' ideas centred around community/social events:

- Catered picnics and family events
- Historic tours of Gleniffer Brae
- Functions like weddings and memorials
- Community group meetups

Technology and innovation

- Interactive screens and terminals
- Self-guided tours using modern tech
- Digital engagement tools

Health and wellbeing

- Yoga, Tai Chi, and fitness walks
- Mental health walks in partnership with local services
- Meditation and wellness events
- Medicinal properties of plants

Accessibility and inclusion

- More activities and access for people with disabilities
- Visitor centre or café run by people with disabilities
- A designated pathway that allows access to people with dogs on-leash (that avoids fragile areas)

Question: Do you have any ideas for commercial activities you'd like to see at the Botanic Garden?

58 of the 78 online respondents provided ideas via this question. The key themes identified are summarised below.

Hospitality and retail offerings

The most consistent and strongly supported idea was the establishment of a permanent café and visitor centre. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with current offerings, describing past café experiences as inadequate or non-existent. Suggestions included:

- A purpose-built combined café, gift shop and visitor information centre/information hub
 - If built as a Private/Council partnership would enhance the visitor experience and return revenue to Council
- Selling plants at the café/visitor centre
- A building that incorporates new bathroom amenities to replace the current outdated toilet block
- A café near the Murphys Avenue entrance or close to the playground and duck pond for visibility and accessibility
- Food trucks

Some respondents proposed using existing structures like Gleniffer Brae or Cratloe Cottage, though there were concerns about preserving the heritage of those buildings.

Markets and entertainment

There was notable interest in hosting markets, particularly:

- Fresh produce and artisan markets
- Seasonal events like Christmas or night markets
- A model like Brisbane City Botanic Garden's market days

Entertainment suggestions included:

- Outdoor theatre and film nights
- Music events, including choral and classical concerts
- Storytelling and low-key arts performances
- Events like Shakespeare in the Park and murder mystery nights

These ideas reflect a desire for the gardens to be a vibrant cultural venue.

Education and tourism opportunities

Several responses highlighted the potential for educational and tourism-related activities:

- Engaging Aboriginal businesses and social enterprises
- Gardening workshops and sustainability demonstrations
- Holiday programs and history tours
- A structured tourism strategy in partnership with Destination Wollongong

There was interest in using the Discovery Centre and existing infrastructure to support education and tourism initiatives, with some advocating for the reversal of decisions affecting educational spaces like the Conservatorium classroom.

Plant sales and nursery expansion

The continuation and expansion of plant sales was another recurring theme.

Suggestions included:

- More tube stock
- Regular/expanded operating hours
- A model based on successful nurseries like Sutherland Community Nursery
- Integration with a gift shop or visitor centre

Events and functions

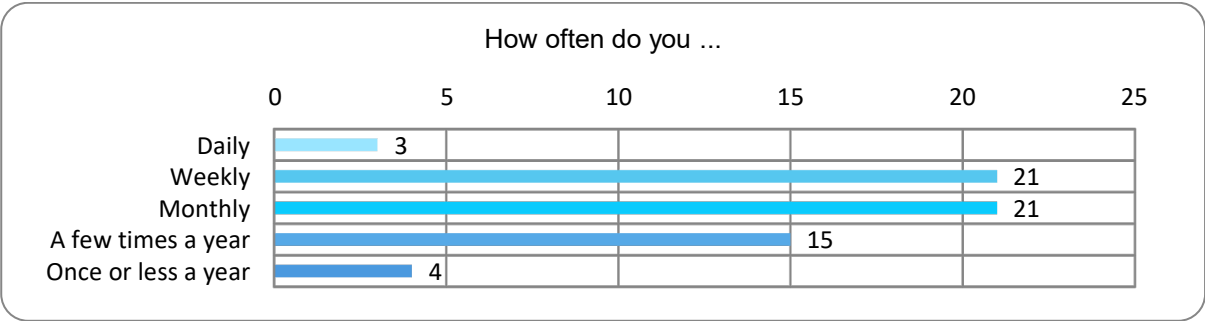
Respondents proposed using the gardens for private and public events, such as:

- Weddings and reunions
- Ticketed events like Vivid-style light shows
- Functions hosted at Gleniffer Brae or other suitable venues
- Film production

Question: Are you aware of the Botanic Garden's monthly GreenPlan native plant sales? Of the 68 responses, 58 said they were aware and only 10 people said they were not aware.

Question: How often do you visit the Botanic Garden?

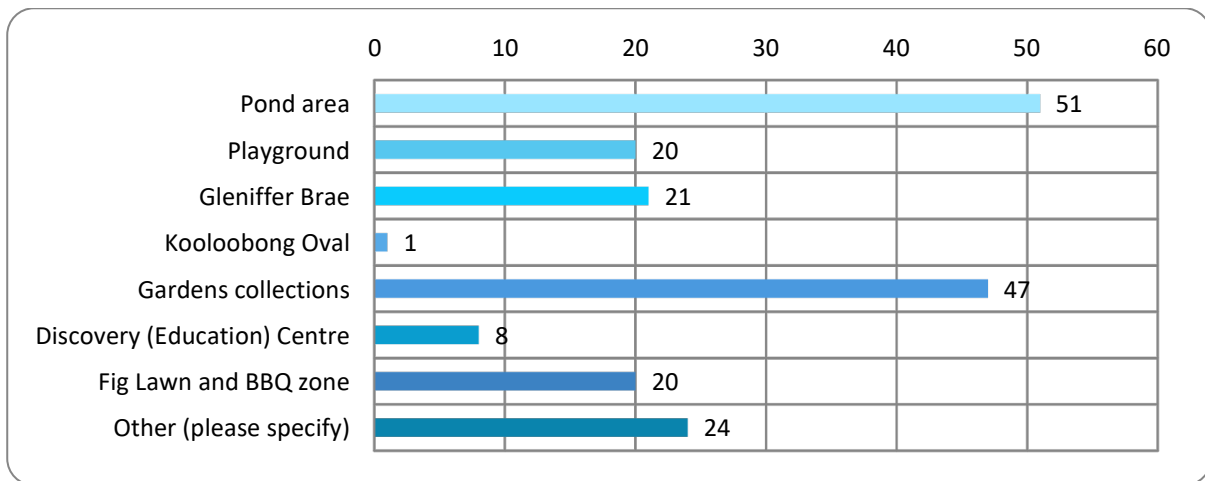
Most respondents said they visit the Garden weekly or monthly.



Question: What are your favourite areas to visit? Select all that apply.

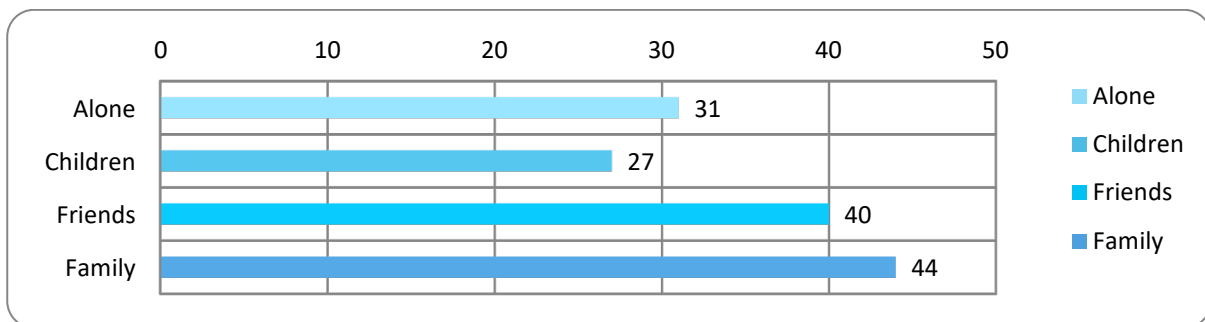
Respondents identified the pond area and gardens collections as their clear favourites with the playground, Gleniffer Brae and the lawn and BBQ area also well-liked.

24 participants selected "other" to express an unlisted area as one of their favourites. Nearly half of these people expressed the rainforest as a favourite area. Other popular unlisted areas were the dry/desert areas, greenhouse, glasshouse, forest and woodland areas.



Question: Who do you mostly visit the Botanic Garden with? Select all that apply.

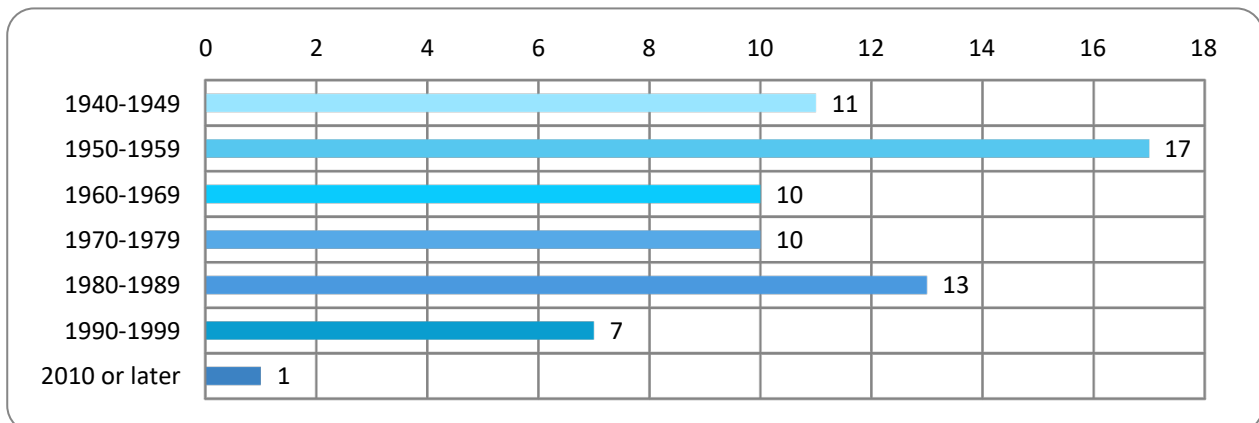
Most participants said they visit with family and friends predominately, although a significant number also said they visit alone or with children.



Question: In which year range were you born?

Of the 69 responses:

- 38 identified as being aged 56 year or more.
- 23 identified as being aged between 36-55 years
- 8 identified as being aged 35 years or less.



Question: What suburb do you live in?

From the online feedback, 39 of 68 respondents identified as living in Keiraville and the surrounding suburbs (Balgownie, Gwynneville, Figtree, Mangerton, Mount Keira, Mount Ousley, North Wollongong, West Wollongong and Wollongong).

All 68 respondents identified as being local to the Illawarra, with participants living as far north as Helensburgh, and as far south as Shellharbour's Lake Heights and Albion Park.

Suburb name	Number of responses	Suburb name	Number of responses
WOLLONGONG, NSW	8	HELENSBURGH, NSW	1
KEIRAVILLE, NSW	8	MOUNT OUSLEY, NSW	1
NORTH WOLLONGONG, NSW	6	WOONONA EAST, NSW	1
FIGTREE, NSW	3	LAKE HEIGHTS, NSW	1
WOONONA, NSW	3	PORT KEMBLA, NSW	1
MANGERTON, NSW	3	CLIFTON, NSW	1
GWYNNEVILLE, NSW	3	AVONDALE, NSW	1
AUSTINMER, NSW	3	CORRIMAL, NSW	1
BELLAMBI, NSW	2	EAST CORRIMAL, NSW	1
HORSLEY, NSW	2	STANWELL PARK, NSW	1
BALGOWNIE, NSW	2	FAIRY MEADOW, NSW	1
MOUNT KEIRA, NSW	2	TULLIMBAR, NSW	1
WEST WOLLONGONG, NSW	2	DAPTO, NSW	1
MOUNT KEMBLA, NSW	2	ALBION PARK, NSW	1
CORDEAUX HEIGHTS, NSW	2		

Next Steps

The feedback heard from the community will now be considered by the project team. All the responses from the feedback form, open submissions and face to face events will be reviewed in detail. Updates may be made to the Masterplan, and a final version will be reported back to Council for their consideration.

All feedback is important and is one factor in the decision-making process for Council. The graphic below shows some of the factors we consider in our decision making:



All identified stakeholders, participants and the broader community will be updated on this project as it progresses. Updates will be made available via the Our Wollongong website.

Appendices

Appendix 1

The General Manager

On behalf of Robert Woodward's family, I write to strongly urge the Council to fully refurbish the Mercury Five Islands Fountain to original working order. The fountain has languished for some time allowing the hydraulic equipment and pool structure to fall into disrepair. Following Council's welcome enquiries in 2017 seeking to reactivate the fountain, our family commissioned a specialist engineering refurbishment report for Council's budgeting and consideration. Since that time we have unsuccessfully pursued positive action from Council.

The current Masterplan presents a welcome opportunity to redress the status quo. However we note with disappointment that the Masterplan 2025 proposes only interpretative signage for the fountain, a very poor civic response to a generously donated work by the Illawarra Mercury. The current Councillors may not be aware that my father specifically designed the powerful waterplay for Wollongong City - representing the five islands, the surf coast & local industry with wave forms cast in now weathered steel. The five sculptural forms have stood silent and still for too long. Returning the fountain's essential water element for renewed movement, light and sound would honour both the Illawarra Mercury's generosity and my father's design intention, even for just a short time each day.

We look forward to a renewed fountain and welcome any opportunity to assist Council in that endeavour.

regards

Jane van Hagen (nee Woodward)





Submission to Council on the Wollongong Botanic Garden Draft Master Plan by The Friends of Wollongong Botanic Garden (FWBG)

Context: The Friends of the Botanic Garden have been working hard (Since 1981) on making this wonderful Wollongong asset more enjoyable for residents and visitors from other areas such as Sydney, the rest of Australia and from overseas.

- Membership sits at almost 160 people
- The Garden benefited from over 4600 volunteer hours in 2024.
- The Friends play a major part in making major events possible - Botanic Garden Day, Nature Shake - as well as providing regular buggy and walking tours for visitors
- In 2025 alone the Friends allocated **\$90,000** for projects in the Garden.

Summary of our Submission

The Friends of WBG support the many excellent components of The Draft Master Plan contains, as detailed below. However, there are a few aspects that should be altered and added to allow the Plan to deliver an enhanced visitor experience and to realise the full potential of this garden. At the heart of the garden should be a **high-quality, integrated Visitor Information Centre and café.**

Our highest priorities are:

- Immediate planning for a multi-purpose Visitor Information Centre (VIC)/Café/toilet complex. The Master Plan should consider options and decide on a functional design and the best possible location for a facility combining visitors information centre, gift shop, café, public toilets and workspaces, capable of being built in stages.
- Reverse the decision to locate and build a new toilet block just inside the main entry, in an area that is listed as Iconic Vista No. 10. Delay the building of the toilet in any location until after the planning for a Visitor Information Centre/Café has been completed.
- Retain Cratloe Cottage as an educational precinct, although review the building's condition. There are many reasons why Cratloe Cottage would not be suitable as a café (see Point 2).
- Develop a comprehensive Tourism Policy that includes infrastructure development proposals related to tourism needs, marketing and promotion, stakeholder engagement and capacity building. In the Draft Master Plan there is no listing of *Future Management Actions* related to tourism. The ambition is to lift visitation from 340,000 to 500,000. This can best be done with an integrated Tourism Strategy and Business Plan with a Visitor Information Centre/Café at the core.

Submission in Detail

Comments related to the 'Traffic Lights' (Green, Yellow, Red) Table of Project Priorities.

1. Add to Short Term Priorities1 - 2 years Funded (Green panel)
"Multi-function Visitors Information Centre: consider options and decide on a functional design and location for a facility combining visitors information, gift shop, café, public

toilets and work spaces, capable of being built in stages as funding enables. (Operationally funded).

Reasoning:

- a. Wollongong Botanic Garden is the only regional Botanic Garden in Australia without either a Visitor Information Centre or a café. These are the facilities visitors first look for when they arrive at the BG.
 - b. A Visitors Information Centre and Café at WBG is an essential component to enhance the visitor experience by providing a welcoming first point of contact, offering orientation, information, and access to resources. A cafe provides a place for visitors to relax, refresh, and socialise, contributing to a more enjoyable and extended visitation. As noted in the Master Plan page 17.
 - c. There are many advantages to developing an integrated visitor centre, including:
 - An information space providing face-to-face tourist information not just about the garden but for the whole of the Illawarra. (Essentially a satellite 'Destination Illawarra' location in the city).
 - A building which could be an educational centre about sustainable living with exemplar design and materials.
 - A centre to facilitate a number of the MP stated 'Community Opportunities' listed on Page 15. e.g. Inclement weather location for regular activities such as Budding Bookworms
 - A centre to facilitate a number of the MP stated 'Commercial Opportunities' listed on Page 15. (e. g. native food events and other gatherings).
 - d. Integrating a café with a Visitor Information space increases the financial viability of the café including expanded wedding venue opportunities.
 - e. Other regional botanic gardens with lower visitation rates have successfully implemented similar centres that combine cafés, gift shops, multipurpose rooms, and plant sales - all of which are popular and profitable, generating income for the Botanic Garden.
2. Concurrent with 1. Above remove ***"Cratloe Cottage Café or alternative site feasibility (operationally funded)"***

Reasoning:

- a. The Friends WBG do not consider Cratloe Cottage (the Discovery Centre) is feasible as a café, principally due to the following issues

Location. The distance from main entrance at Murphy's Avenue (500-600 steps) and a hilly approach (20 metre vertical difference).

Parking. Convenience, number of spaces, street access, impact of possible extended major suburban development in area to the immediate east.

Setting. The impact of a large camphor laurel on interior light and temperature (cold and dark).

Access. Disability access from the front is not available. Disability access from the rear is narrow and goes through the kitchen.

Layout. The kitchen is small in a narrow, enclosed verandah and would require a complete fit out. The toilet is only accessible through the kitchen.

Building condition. There is asbestos material in the walls and possibly elsewhere.

Cost. The Council has said that the cost of building alterations and fit out are to be borne by lessee (as suggested by Council officers during community consultations for the Draft WBG Master Plan).

- b. FWBG has sought professional advice from architectural and café proprietor sources. "On location alone, a lessee would not last 6 months" (Café proprietor).
 - c. FWBG cannot envisage any potential lessee paying for the required building alterations before attempting to run a successful venture.
We consider funding a feasibility study is an unwise use of the WBG Budget.
 - d. FWBG supports retaining Cratloe Cottage (Discovery Centre) as an educational precinct, and a review of the building's condition.
3. Add to Short Term Priorities 1 - 2 years Funded (Green panel)
"Murphys Avenue Entry Renewal – Design" (Capital Funded)

Reasoning:

Immediate design work is required to allow Capital funded works in the Mid-Term years.

4. Add to Short Term Priorities 1 - 2 years Funded (Green panel)
"Integrated Tourism Strategy and Business Plan (Operationally Funded)"

Reasoning:

- a. The plan lacks a comprehensive Tourism Policy that includes infrastructure development proposals related to tourism needs, marketing and promotion, stakeholder engagement and capacity building.
- b. In the Draft Master Plan there is no listing of *Future Management Actions* related to tourism. The ambition is to lift visitation from 340,000 to 500,000. This can best be done with an integrated Tourism Strategy and Business Plan with a Visitor Information Centre/Café at the core.

5. The Friends are pleased to see the belated change (since June 30 Council Motion) to move from Short Term Priorities 1 - 2 years Funded (Green panel) to Mid-term Funding *"Murphys Avenue entry/Accessible Toilet"* (Yellow panel).

Reasoning:

- a. Council's adopted Infrastructure Development Program (IDP) for Botanic Gardens shows Funding of \$1.5 Million for Southern Amenities in year 3 (2027/28).
- b. Currently there are no plans drawn up for the proposed immediate upgrade of Murphy's Avenue Entrance.
- c. The decision to locate and build a new toilet block just inside the main entry, in an area that is listed in The Master Plan as Iconic Vista No. 10 should be reversed. (*"...it will be important for the enduring landscape and botanical values of the Garden to ensure that the best views into, across and out of the Garden are conserved"*. Quote Master Plan page 19).
- d. Delay the building of the toilet in any location until after the planning for a Visitor Information Centre/Café has been completed to ensure that any potential VIC/Cafe site is not quarantined.

6. The Friends are pleased to see the belated change (since June 30 Council Motion) to move to Short Term Priorities¹ - 2 years Funded (Green panel) from Mid-term Priorities

'Mercury Fountain Interpretation (BG Friends Contribution)'

Reasoning:

- a. There are many environmental, electrical and structural issues which prevent the fountain from being returned to its original working state.
- b. Funding for such an interpretation has been held by the Friends and is immediately available.

Other Documented Master Plan Priorities

7. *Propagation Glasshouse/Solar/Depot Renewal* - Endorse.
Comments: Urgent work is required, although it is not listed as a short-term priority and 'funding (is) to be confirmed'.
8. *Gleniffer Brae Heritage Renewal works* – Endorse.
Comments: The Plan of Management for Gleniffer Brae is an excellent document with all its detail and recommended works for maintenance. It is good to see the recommendations are already being implemented.
9. *Site Activation Market testing* – Endorse.
Comments: This should not exist in isolation in the Master plan but be part of an Integrated Tourism and Business plan.
10. *Kawasaki Bridge* – Endorse.

Comments: The Friends of Wollongong Botanic Garden has been pushing hard for this iconic feature of the garden to be restored. As a Kawasaki sister city gift, it deserves prompt attention.
11. *Site Irrigation/Duck Pond Water quality aerator and silt investigation.* – Endorse.
Comments: Any operational work on rectifying the water quality and silting issues in the duck pond has major implications for visitor experience.
12. *Gleniffer Brae carriageway, accessibility and other capital improvements.* – Endorse.
Comments: A path the linking Gleniffer Brae precinct to the Braeside Avenue gates and the rest of the Gardens should also be a priority.
13. *Accessible entry from Northfields Avenue* - Endorse.
Comments: The Botanic Garden bus stop has been neglected for many years and has no identifying signage. The adjacent entry gates are locked and entry to the garden is some many metres walk to the original 1970's main entrance.
14. *Joseph Banks Glasshouse/Temperate Garden.* – Endorse.
Comments: The glasshouse is overdue for replacement or needs to be re-imagined.
15. *Rainforest final stage all access and aerial walk.* - Endorse.
Comments: This has been a long-term BG project, which requires substantial funding through sponsorship and/or grants.

Comments related to the Draft Wollongong Botanic Garden Master Plan 2025 – 2035 (S17 – 0075)

Master Plan Report

Present in this document are the required elements to identify long term improvements to guide the development and service delivery for Wollongong Botanic Garden.

We commend the report for

- The detailed nature of the Draft Master Plan especially the Issues, Constraints and Opportunities Section for the Living Collections.
- The 'Principles and Strategy Section' for the Living Collections with its listing of 'Current Conditions' and identification of 'Future Management Actions'

Specific Comments.

- Parking is a major issue for visitors. Extend the number of two-hour limited parking spaces on the north side of Murphys Avenue to the WBG Braeside Gates.
- Add a section on 'Tourism', equivalent to the 'Concept Master Plan - Living Collections'. Include 'Current Position' and more importantly 'Future Management Actions'.
- Page 24: Landscape Plan Projects for 2025- 2035
 - Support Projects 1 – 3, 5 and 7 – 13 unreservedly.
 - Do not support Project 4: Cratloe Cottage as Café Feasibility Study (See above)
 - Qualified Support for Project 6: Make subject to immediate planning for a multi-purpose Visitor Information Centre (VIC)/Café/toilet complex.
- Pages 28, 29. Provide context for photos by linking them to specifics aspects of the Plan Report, otherwise remove or replace with alternative photos with associated context.

Questions Raised in Draft Master Plan Consultation What Council tells the community in the FAQ's

FAQ 1

"The development of the Wollongong Botanic Garden Masterplan commenced in 2018-19," – a 7-year process.

Our Response: How long has it taken for the Master Plan to reach this stage?
Actually 18 years! – First proposed in 2007 (WCC sourced documents)

FAQ 6

"Why doesn't the draft Master Plan include plans for building a new Café"?

"The priority is to repair and repurpose the City's current buildings rather than build new ones".

Our Response: The Southern Suburbs Community Centre & Library, Warrawong \$41 million shows that there are and should be exceptions to this policy for community benefit.

The North Beach Surf Life Saving Club & Seawall - \$10.5 million is a building that has been repaired and upgraded but not repurposed. It had the right purpose, the right location but also the historic and cultural importance to have a sympathetic but expensive rejuvenation.

Sometimes doing this is more expensive than erecting a new building.

The Friends suggest that choosing Cratloe Cottage is in essence a decision to not have a café. Further we consider funding a feasibility study is an unwise use of the WBG Budget. (See point 2)

FAQ 7:

“If the Discovery Centre building is repurposed what spaces will be used for education”?

“The Botanic Gardens is transitioning to a service where education is delivered entirely outdoors. This framework makes best use of the Gardens most precious asset, the gardens themselves”.

Our Response: There is nothing to prevent outdoor delivery now – it’s what happens and has happened for decades.

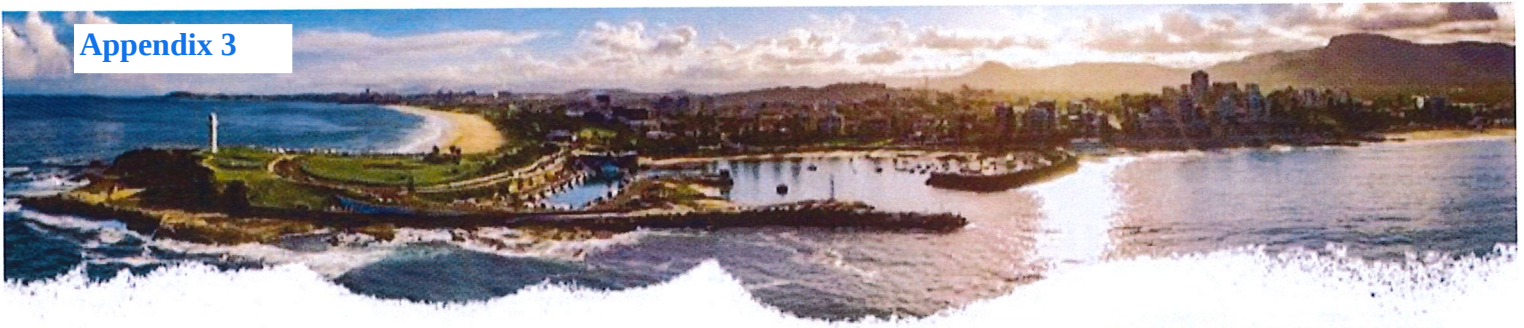
Except when weather is unsuitable – rain, wind, excessive heat. Except when needing a place to retreat to, for safe storage of student bags and equipment. A location for teaching materials and equipment. A location for setting up displays, using microscopes and other teaching aids not easily carried from storage. The Cottage can be used for so much more.

None of these advantages in delivering education can occur if the Cottage becomes a café.

John Maxwell
President
Friends of Wollongong Botanic Garden

Jane Crowe
Secretary
Friends of Wollongong Botanic Garden

Dated: Tuesday 12 August 2025



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20 August 2025

Greg Doyle, General Manager
Wollongong City Council

Destination Wollongong would like to provide feedback on the drafted Wollongong Botanic Garden Master Plan.

Commercial nature-based attraction

It is our opinion that hosting a commercial, nature-based attraction should be a priority focus for the future of the Botanic Garden.

- Tourism trends favour hands-on and immersive nature-based experiences that combine activity, education and engagement rather than passive observation. A notable example can be seen in treetop adventure parks, which combine environmental education with hands-on obstacle courses and curriculum-linked outdoor learning to create immersive, nature-based experiences.
- Incorporating this type of commercial attraction would align the Botanic Garden with market demand and can be achieved while balancing commercial activity with the Botanic Garden's core environmental values.

Central hub with food & beverage offering

An up-market, licensed cafe should be considered for a central hub within the Botanic Garden, providing a unique dining experience in natural surrounds.

- A high-quality food and beverage anchor the gardens and encourage longer dwell times, repeat visitation and complement the development of a commercial attraction.
- Conversion of Cratloe Cottage could be explored as a first option. The site could serve as a hybrid hub that includes:
 - cafe/restaurant operations
 - garden information centre functions
 - amenities such as toilets and rest points
 - a modest merchandise offering
- Precedent for this type of central but can be seen in Eurobodalla, Coffs Harbour and Orange, where similar hubs have successfully elevated botanic gardens by creating this type of anchor space, becoming a destination in its own right.
- Consideration of attractive lease terms may help establish the start-up and attract a viable, high-quality operator.

Indigenous tours and experiences

Indigenous tourism is a priority within Destination NSW's Visitor Economy Strategy reset, reflecting strong visitor demand for authentic and cultural storytelling.

- A bush tucker tour offers a unique point of difference that could be formalised as a regular product by expanding the indigenous cultural offering with additional activities e.g. basket-weaving, spear or boomerang throwing, creating a dedicated tourism product.
- There is potential to embed this experience into the Botanic Garden's education curriculum, and partner with local education providers would directly aligning with the Master Plan's goal to "promote environmental educational opportunities."

Coach and group tours

The Botanic Garden is well positioned to attract coach, seniors and special interest groups.

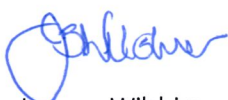
- Developing tailored group experiences would expand awareness of the garden and align with key markets such as seniors and cruise visitors.
- Provision of dedicated bus bays will be important to ensure accessibility and minimise pressure on existing parking.

Other opportunities

- **Glenniffer Brae:** Opening sections of the building to the public and exploring the feasibility of upgrading infrastructure around the natural amphitheatre in front to host small-scale concerts and events (up to 3,000 capacity).
- **Expand buggy tour operations:** By further utilising the knowledgeable volunteer base, expansion of this program will allow for a more accessible, inclusive and enjoyable visitor experience.
- **Cruise market:** Suggest aligning the Garden with Destination Wollongong activity surrounding the Cruise Market and assess cruise tour opportunities should this come to fruition.
- **Parking:** Addressing parking constraints will be essential as visitation grows and as new attractions are introduced.

In summary, the Wollongong Botanic Garden is well placed to become a flagship nature-based experience for the Illawarra. With targeted investment in immersive attractions, a strong food and beverage anchor, Indigenous storytelling and improved group accessibility, the Botanic Garden can evolve into a must-visit destination with statewide and national appeal. Strategic focus and commercial incentives could transform this latent asset into a bona fide regional attraction that could potentially double its current visitation.

Kind regards,



Jeremy Wilshire

General Manager – Destination Wollongong



ILLAWARRA BIRDERS INC.
email: illawarrabirdersinc@gmail.com
website: www.illawarrabirders.org

WOLLONGONG BOTANIC GARDENS DRAFT MASTERPLAN 2025

17th August 2025

Illawarra Birders Inc. Response to Wollongong Botanic Gardens Draft Masterplan 2025.

Illawarra Birders acknowledge and support in principle the draft masterplan.

We recommended the following.

Rainforest:

Illawarra Birders notes that there is a lack of connectivity of rainforest from the western end of the garden. We suggest that street plantings of local indigenous rainforest species will help provide a corridor between Mt Keira and the Garden. In addition, the planting of rainforest species in the grassed area on the northern side of the pathway near the western gate would extend the Garden's rainforest area and improve its connectivity.

Links to Mt Keira:

Linking the Ken Ausburn track to the Garden will provide increased opportunities and an improved overall experience for local bushwalkers.

Rainforest Collection:

Only local indigenous species should be planted in the rainforest area as a way of protecting the native vegetation at Mt Keira.

Location of Amphitheater:

The amphitheater is located too far from parking facilities and the area is often affected by water runoff after heavy rain. The use of intense lighting so close to the rainforest will have a negative effect on nocturnal species of mammals and birds that live in the rainforest. A better location for the amphitheatre would be on the western side of the woodland garden.

Woodland Garden:

There are several large mature Turpentine trees located in the woodland garden. It is stated in the masterplan that the Turpentine trees use of water limits the collection that can be grown in the area, it is important that these trees are protected.

Lake and surrounding planting:

Increase the depth of the lake and the construction of a silt trap is recommended. Investigation for improvement of water quality flowing into the creek line from the housing area to the west of the Garden should be implemented as soon as possible.

Gleniffer Brae:

The planting of trees in the lawn area east of Gleniffer Brae to the woodlands garden will improve the visual effect of this area. A problem with the planting of trees to form an open woodland is a potential increase in the population of Noisy Miners. Planting trees in groups leaving lawn areas between them make the area less attractive to Noisy Miners.

Korrongulla Wetland:

There is a need for an all-weather circular track around the wetland, including a board walk. There should also be interpretive signage of birds and other wildlife that can be found the wetland. The construction of a bird hide overlooking the open water would provide opportunities for observing the birdlife in general, and in particular the cormorants for which this is an important breeding location.

Regards

Belinda Baccarini

Illawarra Birders

(Secretary)



Keiraville Residents Action Group Inc.

Wollongong Botanic Garden Submission

Introduction

Keiraville residents are fortunate to have one of Wollongong's true gems in our neighbourhood. We commend the Council's effort to guide the future of the Wollongong Botanic Garden (WBG) through a new master plan.

Summary of Our Submission

The Keiraville Residents Action Group (KRAG) supports many initiatives in the Draft Master Plan. However, we believe certain amendments are essential to fully unlock the Garden's potential. Our key recommendations focus on:

- Maximising the Garden's potential and improving the visitor experience.
- Enhancing access while addressing the surrounding constraints.

The Importance of a Botanic Garden

Botanic gardens are increasingly popular hubs for conservation, education, and community engagement as well as providing a place for people to relax and enjoy nature. They also serve as significant tourist attractions, boosting the local economy and creating jobs.

Protecting and Enhancing Educational Facilities

One of the Garden's core values is environmental education, a principle highlighted in both the existing Plan of Management and the Draft Master Plan. For many years, the historic Cratloe Cottage has been a vital educational hub for students and visitors.

The current draft's proposal to convert Cratloe Cottage into a café and move all educational programs outdoors contradicts the Garden's long-standing educational mission.

Botanic gardens play a crucial role in:

- Helping people learn about the natural world and environmental stewardship
- Raising public awareness of environmental issues and sustainability

- Demonstrating climate change effects and its impact on plant life.
- Providing educational resources on plant diversity, conservation, and horticulture.

Our Proposal: Retain and Refurbish Cratloe Cottage

- Retain and refurbish Cratloe Cottage as a dedicated educational precinct, equipped for workshops, lectures, exhibitions, and interactive programs.
- Enhance the Garden's ability to deliver structured, indoor learning activities, especially in all-weather conditions and for diverse audiences.

Visitor Centre & Café Infrastructure

A Visitor Centre and Café are essential for a large regional botanic garden and become a true tourism anchor. Such a hub would:

- Provide a welcoming first point of contact with maps and information.
- Encourage longer visits by offering a place to rest and socialise.
- Serve as a functional hub for volunteers and guided tours, as well as a space to sell merchandise and local products.
- Deliver meaningful economic returns through tourism, jobs, and local partnerships.

The current draft's minimal approach—suggesting only market testing and external investment—lacks a comprehensive tourism strategy. Unless goals, actions, and infrastructure planning are defined, even well-intentioned components like a café are unlikely to succeed and the target of 500,000 annual visitors are unlikely to be met.

Our Proposal: Prioritise a Visitor Centre and Café

- Embed a structured tourism or business strategy within the Master Plan.
- Prioritise the development of a Visitor Centre and Café to enhance the visitor experience, drive economic returns, and help meet the visitation target.

Activating Gleniffer Brae

The historic Manor House, Gleniffer Brae and Sorensen Garden, at the highest point of the Garden, are a must-see for visitors. Unfortunately, the public cannot access the house's interior. As Wollongong's only "grand house" from the 1930s, Gleniffer Brae is a valuable historical and aesthetic asset. It is intimately connected to the city's economic development through its original owner, Sydney Hoskins, who was instrumental in establishing the Illawarra steel industry.

Our Proposal: Open Gleniffer Brae to the Public

- Investigate options for opening the front rooms of Gleniffer Brae to the public, showcasing memorabilia about the Hoskins family and the house's architectural features.
- Improve wayfinding and access by installing a disability-compliant path and clear signage from the lower parts of the Garden.

Restoring the Five Islands (Mercury) Fountain

The Illawarra Mercury Five Islands Fountain is a historical and cultural landmark, relocated to the Garden in 1984. The draft plan unfortunately overlooks the possibility of restoration due to mechanical issues and cost.

Our Proposal: Investigate Restoring the Fountain Sustainably

We recommend investigating options for restoring the fountain on a part-time basis by redesigning its water delivery system to be more energy and water efficient.

Improving Connectivity, Access, & Parking

While the draft mentions improving access from the University of Wollongong, it fails to address broader parking and access issues. Furthermore, the nearby Gwynneville Housing Planning Proposal, which plans for up to 1,250 new dwellings, will significantly worsen parking conditions around the Gardens.

Our Proposal: Create a Comprehensive Access Plan

- Embed a comprehensive access planning strategy within the Master Plan.
- Extend the time-limited parking on Murphys Avenue, particularly along the angled (90°) parking near the main entrance.
- Promote the free shuttle bus from Wollongong Council Chambers - via the large visible digital display above the Chambers' entrance.
- Enhance active transport links to the Garden from the north, south, and the coastal cycleway.
- Encourage alternative modes of travel by highlighting the Garden at key public transport routes and tourist locations.

Conclusion

KRAG supports many elements of the draft Master Plan but urges critical amendments to preserve the Garden's legacy and enhance its future. We respectfully request that Wollongong City Council integrates the following proposals into the final Master Plan:

- Preserve and enhance Cratloe Cottage as an educational hub.
- Develop a Visitor Centre and Café with a clear tourism strategy.
- Improve access to Gleniffer Brae.
- Investigate the restoration of the Five Islands Fountain sustainably.
- Advance transport, parking, and accessibility planning.

Geoff Kelly
KRAG Inc.

NTISB25016.1

20 August 2025

The General Manager
Wollongong City Council
Locked Bag 8821
Wollongong DC NSW 2500
Email: gdoyle@wollongong.nsw.gov.au; engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au;

Dear Mr Doyle,

National Trust submission relating to the Wollongong Botanic Garden Draft Masterplan

The National Trust's Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to the Wollongong Botanic Garden Draft Masterplan. We note that this garden is significant to the local and regional community for its aesthetic, recreational, ecological and community values. We also note that it incorporates the historic Gleniffer Brae property, listed by the National Trust in 1985.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch is largely supportive of the Draft Masterplan, noting that the document appropriately considers the conservation of both the Gleniffer Brae House and Sorensen designed garden, as well as the long-term care of the landscaping and living assets of the whole garden. We make comment on the following areas of concern:

Maintenance of significant views to and from Gleniffer Brae

- The Conservation Management Plan for the Gleniffer Brae estate recognises the need to conserve important view lines to and from the property, noting that "the siting and orientation of the house was all about the views". The house once stood in a panoramic location with a garden designed to frame its surrounding scenery from all angles.
- The CMP also notes that, unfortunately "Over time, views from Gleniffer Brae to the south and west have been obscured by the maturing landscape and development of surrounding suburbs".
- It is thus prudent to conserve the remaining significant views from Gleniffer Brae manor house across the eastern slopes towards the coast, towards Mount Pleasant, and back towards Mount Keira. We also recognise important views throughout the Botanic Gardens, such as between the manor house and the gardener's cottage, which was part of Sorenson's original design.
- We recommend that this view retention be prioritised in the deliverables of the Masterplan.
- The Trust is similarly the custodian of a 1930s Sorensen garden at our property Everglades, in Leura NSW. We understand the challenges of maintaining these significant landscapes with a limited budget, and would be happy to share any resources we have regarding the history of Sorensen's work.



Activation of the amphitheatre

- The Trust notes that the Masterplan considers the activation of the amphitheatre. The plans include activation for night time activities.
- The Trust has concerns that the introduction of bright lighting and associated temporary event infrastructure, along with increased noise and activity, will negatively impact wildlife, particularly nocturnal species living within the grounds, disrupting their environment and impacting their overall conservation.
- The Trust recommends appropriate investigation into the effects this proposal would have on the resident wildlife before its introduction to the Botanic Garden.
- Activation of this site, or any site, so deeply placed inside the gardens comes with a number of issues. For example:
 - Rubbish removal.
 - Lighting, and associated infrastructure, disrupting the visual impact both day and night.
 - Bathroom amenities for patrons.
 - Additional pathways. The Trust would not support additional pathways, particularly any that were fenced or lighted, disrupting the views to or from Gleniffer Brae or impacting on the cultural garden.

Plans for café facilities

- The Masterplan proposes the establishment of a new facility for a café and bathrooms in the Botanic Garden.
- The Trust recommends that this building is best located on the perimeter of the garden, allowing for appropriate services to access the site directly from the street, without disturbing the park landscape.
- The Trust recommends that this building be designed to have minimal visual and physical impact upon the gardens. A low scale, partially buried, sympathetic design that is integrated sensitively and unobtrusively into the landscape is required.

Gleniffer Brae carriageway, accessibility and other capital improvements

- The carriageway is a significant architectural form within the Sorensen garden, much of which is now buried under turf for conservation reasons.
- There is no detail provided in the draft Masterplan or accompanying Table of Project Priorities, however the endorsed Gleniffer Brae Conservation Management Plan provides recommendations for future management of the carriageway.
- Any upgrades to the carriageway need to protect and conserve the original fabric and form.
- The Trust would be happy to review any future plans given our experience in maintaining the Sorensen garden at Everglades.

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch represents the local views of the Illawarra Shoalhaven heritage community



Weed management and potential bush escapes

- The Trust's Bushland Management Services is a recognised leader in weed management and bushland regeneration with over forty years experience.
- We note there is no reference to weed management and potential bush escapes within the document. The Masterplan should include some discussion on:
 - How introduced species, which are an essential part of the Botanic Garden, are assessed and managed to prevent bush escape.
 - The management of weeds that people or birds may introduce, to ensure the integrity of the collection and the native bush areas.

The wider bush corridor

- The Botanic Garden is an important part of a wider bush corridor; however, there is little acknowledgement of this within the Masterplan.
- Future planning should enhance the connectivity along the corridor for birds and other native species, but without the potential for weed escape, as mentioned above. The Trust acknowledges this will be a fine balance that will require active management.

Please feel free to contact me on 0488 037 234 should you wish to discuss this response further.

Yours Faithfully,

Fiona Reynolds
Chair, Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch
National Trust of Australia (NSW)
M: 0488 037 234

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Branch represents the local views of the Illawarra Shoalhaven heritage community

The National Trust of Australia (New South Wales) ABN 82 491 958 802

Neighbourhood Forum 5 Wollongong's Heartland <i>Collaborating with Council on community aspirations, visions, needs & concerns</i>		Coniston, Figtree, Gwynneville, Keiraville, Mangerton, Mount Keira, Mount St Thomas, North Wollongong, West Wollongong, Wollongong City.
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Wollongong Botanic Gardens Masterplan Submission by NF5 - 20 August 2025

Council is thanked for resolving on 30 June to publicly exhibit the draft Wollongong Botanic Gardens (WBG) Masterplan (MP) and to consider community feedback prior to adoption. The following submission by NF5 reflects issues raised by residents re this version of the MP and builds on previous submissions re draft MPs in 2018 and 2023, and the Plan of Management adopted by Council in July 2020. Three documents on exhibition include: a) “Masterplan Report” (which includes the Landscape Plan listing 13 Projects in the next ten years), b) “Masterplan” (ie the 1-page Landscape Plan), and c) Table of Project Priorities. The relevant section of Council’s 4-year Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) adopted on 30 June is not included, and there seem to be some discrepancies with the Table of Project Priorities, but it is not clear if this will be included in the MP.

The draft MP Report (Issue P dated 27 June 2024) has many similarities with the 2023 draft MP and includes helpful details from the 2018 draft MP by consultants, including Vision, Mission, Goals & Objectives, etc. It is appreciated that many of the issues raised in NF5 submission Dec 2023 have been dealt with, and most current initiatives are supported, particularly the long-awaited repairs to the Kawasaki Drum Bridge.

Attachment A is NF5 table summarising the projects, priorities, relevant IDP funding and NF5 suggested Actions, many of which are supportive, to assist consideration by Council when finalising the MP.

A major omission in the draft MP is planning for a Multi-Purpose Facility (MPF) including functional design and preferred location for a Visitors Information Centre, with a giftshop, kiosk/café, public toilets, workspaces and storage, capable of being built in stages as funding becomes available. A MPF is fundamentally essential and is referenced in the 2018 draft MP, the WBG Plan of Management 2020, NF5 submissions in 2023 and recently. Other regional botanic gardens with lower visitation rates have successfully implemented similar facilities, which are functional, popular and profitable. It is understood the Friends of WBG may be able to assist with funding towards the MPF planning work, which would enable this to be advanced and occur in the short term (years 1-2).

Also planning for a MPF would preclude the need for two projects proposed in Council's Table of Project Priorities c), ie Site Activation market testing (years 1-2) and Cratloe Cottage Café or alternative site feasibility (years 2-5). This would enable the proposed accessible toilet works (in years 2-5) to be located and built as part of the MPF, rather than at Murphy's Ave entry, as proposed in Table c). Also Cratloe cottage should be repaired and retained as an indoor/outdoor education centre, which is a critical to be able to achieve Council expressed Vision of "a Regional Botanic Garden of Excellence meeting the diverse visitor experience expectations of the community at the local level, whilst making a valued contribution at a global level through our work in Horticulture Plant Conservation and Environmental education";

The proposed upgrade of Murphys Ave Carpark, in Table of Project Priorities c) years 5-10, can readily be advanced at minimal cost to years 1-2, by extending the 2-hour limit for parking on the northern side of Murphy's Ave in proximity to WBG entries.

Item 3 in the Landscape Plan b) is to "Interpret the Robert Woodward Mercury Fountain." This has recently attracted considerable local publicity about restoring the unique fountain. NF5 suggests that Council explore options for determining the feasibility and cost, including through UoW and/or suitably qualified and experienced local engineering consultants, and seek sponsorship to defray costs.

WBG is consistently rated as the highest level of satisfaction by respondents to Council's two-yearly statistically reliable and representative sample Community Satisfaction Survey. It is a major regional tourist attraction and therefore the MP needs to include development of an integrated Tourism Strategy and Business plan, in conjunction with Council, Destination Wollongong, Wollongong Conservatorium, UoW, Friends of WBG, and local representatives. This will facilitate progress towards achieving an increase in annual visitation to about 500,000, as proposed in the 2020 Plan of Management. A useful reference document is the Botanic Gardens of Sydney Tourism Strategy 2030.

In summary we look forward to robust debate and adoption of a workable Management Plan, with prioritisation of actions, commitment of adequate funding, timely and effective implementation, to help realise the potential for our much-loved and cared-for regionally outstanding Botanic Gardens.

Please contact the undersigned if any clarification and/or further information is required.

David Winterbottom
Secretary

Attachment A - WBG MP documents on exhibition – comparisons & NF5 suggested Actions

ATTACHMENT A

WBG MP documents on exhibition – comparisons & NF5 suggested Actions

- a) “Masterplan Report” (incl Landscape Plan p 24). Assume this is Masterplan doc
- b) “Masterplan” (incl in Masterplan doc as 1 page Landscape Plan – p24 in Report)
- c) Table of Project Priorities doc (Assume not included in Masterplan doc)
- d) Not on Exhibition, but 4-year IDP adopted 30 June 2025 (not incl in Masterplan).

#	Project per Landscape Plan b)	Priority c)	4-yr IDP d)	NF5 Suggested Actions
1	Reconfigure Bus Stop. Upgrade Arrival and Orientation zone. Path from Shuttle Bus. Improve pedestrian links to UoW.	Long. Y 5-10		Y 5-10 OK
2	Redesign and reinvent Glass House and Temperate Garden Zone	Medium. Y 2-5	IDP Y 3 (pt \$1.5M)	IDP Y 3 OK
3	Interpret the Robert Woodward Mercury Fountain	Short Y 1-2		Feasibility to Restore - Seek Sponsorship. Y1-2
4	Investigate feasibility of a commercial cafe operation/activation	Short Y 1-2 Medium Y 2-5		Feasibility of MPF (incl Visitor Inf, Merch, WCs, Café, Work, Store, Deck) Plan Y1-2. Stages > Y3
5	Improve permeability and access with adjoining areas	?		Clarify?
6	Proposed upgraded Entry Zone including New Toilets including Lift and Change Facilities, additional BBQ facilities and Timed Parking	Medium Y 2-5 Long Y 5-10	IDP Yr 3 (\$1.5 M)	Plan with MPF item 4 above. Stage from Y3. Extend short term parking Murphys Y1-2.
7	Manage aeration and water quality of Duck Pond	Medium. Y 2-5		Needed in Short term Y1-2
8	Enhance Asian collection and interpretation in the Middle Creek area	?		Clarify?
9	Upgrade Amphitheatre event space with lighting & temp event infra as needed	?		Clarify?
10	Culture and Heritage Precinct including Gleniffer Brae Manor House, key views and Sorenson Garden. Precinct managed as per the Gleniffer Brae CMP	Short Y 1-2 Medium Y2-5		Y1-2 and Y2-5 OK
11	Collaborate with WollCon re use of the precinct for education, events, activation	?		Clarify? Retain Cratloe as Ed Hub In/Outdoor + Towrie for events
12	Trial local rainforest species for street trees adjacent to entrance	?		Clarify? Seems good initiative
13	Contemporise amenities and infrastructure at Kooloobong Oval to support use	?		Clarify? K. Oval to revert to BG use when required- per 2020 PoM
A	Kawasaki Bridge Renewal (not in Masterplan, but in Project Priorities)	Short Y 1-2	IDP Yr 1 (\$315 K)	Urgent Y1. Scope and get competitive tenders
B	Footpaths Renew (Maybe item 10 in Masterplan? and in Project Priorities)	Medium Y 2-5	IDP Yr 1 (\$250 K)	Clarify? Maybe item 10 above? IDP Y1 OK
C	Depot (not in Masterplan, nor in Project Priorities)		IDP Yr 3 (pt\$1.5M)	Clarify?
D	Tourism Strategy, with Destination Wollongong (not in Masterplan)			Develop Tourism Strategy + implement

Appendix 8

Urban Biodiversity Illawarra
c/o 155 Cabbage Tree Lane
Mount Pleasant NSW 2519

The General Manager
Wollongong City Council
Locked Bag 8821
WOLLONGONG DC NSW 2500
engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

RE: DRAFT WOLLONGONG BOTANIC GARDEN MASTER PLAN

To whom it may concern,

Urban Biodiversity Illawarra (UBI) provides the following comments on Wollongong City Council's (Council) draft Wollongong Botanic Garden Masterplan (the draft Masterplan). We welcome the development and public exhibition of the draft Masterplan and commend Council for the work that has gone into the drafting and consultation process.

UBI is an Illawarra-based organisation committed to the collection and dissemination of information on indigenous flora and fauna of the Illawarra in order to promote its conservation.

Yours sincerely

Dr Emma Rooksby, Mr Leon Fuller and Mr Gary Leonard
Urban Biodiversity Illawarra

21 August 2025

1. Overall approach

UBI suggests that, while there is content on the collections in the draft Masterplan, the overall approach is too focused on particular items of infrastructure within the Wollongong Botanic Garden (WBG).

The Goals and Objectives (p.8) read well, but are not well reflected throughout the document, including the one-page project priorities attachment. They also lack any reference to the local Aboriginal community and cultural heritage, as does the Principles and Strategy section (p.20).

There is insufficient attention given to:

1. ensuring that activities, infrastructure changes or additions and collections acquisition and management align as closely as possible with the Botanic Gardens Conservation International's (BGCI) accreditation process, with particular regard to WBG potentially progressing through the accreditation hierarchy towards 'Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditation' (<https://www.bgci.org/our-work/sharing-knowledge-and-resources/bgci-accreditation-scheme/>);

2. remedying the lack of integration among the collections and the lack of information available to the public about the collections, for example individual plant labels. This issue has been exacerbated in recent years by the ad hoc acceptance of donated collections that do not cohere with what is already in the Garden; and
3. featuring the threatened ecological communities of the region. The focus on threatened species is excellent, but threatened ecological communities are more or less absent from the document, appearing at one point simply as an unexplained abbreviation ('EECs') on p.8. Taking action on this front would help achieve the above point (1). The proposed 'rare and endangered walk' would not necessarily achieve it, as many of the local threatened species do not occur in threatened ecological communities.

2. Local natives/indigenous species and ecological communities

- We commend the focus on local native species at many points in the draft Master Plan, for example under Issues, Constraints and Opportunities (p.11) and the Concept Masterplan – Living Collections (pp17-18). We believe this should be a holistic focus of the WBG, to the extent consistent with the maintenance of much loved non-indigenous collections, and should drive the collection acquisition and management approach on a site that is limited in size and part of a connected 'green corridor' between Mount Keira/Geera and the ocean.
- We don't understand what is meant by 'regional needs' framework for assessing native plant collections/new collections (p.12). This term is not explained in the draft Master Plan.
- We support the plan to review and reinterpret the lower creek (p.12), where the vegetation contains many introduced and invasive species that have self-sown over the years. This is an opportunity to supplement the local native species already planted with more of the same, and to add diversity.
- We would like to see Koolobong Oval also used as a place to plant local native/indigenous specimen trees and to increase coherence of the plantings here over time.
- As well as acknowledging contributors such as Sorenson, Hoskins, Miller and Jocelyn, why not acknowledge the influential work of botanist Anders Bofeldt? We do strongly support acknowledging Aboriginal cultural heritage and ongoing connections to Country and the culturally significant landscape of the Illawarra between escarpment and sea. This should be central.
- We believe the draft Master Plan would benefit from a greater focus on local ecological communities, particularly threatened ecological communities. These unique assemblages of species are a highlight of the region and some, particularly Illawarra Lowlands Grassy Woodland, are very poorly conserved.
 - We support greater connections with the annexes, including via signage, way finding and developing/restoring connections between them and the main WBG.
 - We support review of the Dry Sclerophyll connection with potential to replace with a local ecological community.
- We strongly support the proposal to plant specimen indigenous trees near the Robsons Road entrance, and believe this would be enhanced by underplanting with complementary

understorey species. We recommend planting relatively untried species with high horticultural potential such as:

- Coast Canthium (*Cyclophyllum longipetalum*)
 - Koda (*Ehretia acuminata*)
 - Mock Olive (*Notelaea venosa*)
 - Flintwood (*Scolopia braunii*)
 - Buff Hazelwood (*Symplocos thwaitesii*)
- We believe that intellectual/educational infrastructure such as the Site Plant Survey should be a top priority, and should be considered for dedicated funding as a mid-term priority.

3. Commercialism

- We disagree with the claim that there is a need to ‘balance commercialism with environmentalism focus’ (p.17). The focus of the WBG should be on being an excellent botanic garden, in line with the BGCI accreditation process. The environmental and conservation focus of the WBG should not be compromised. Commercial opportunities should be considered and accepted only insofar as they contribute to that objective. That said, we support some of the proposed activities, which meet this brief (but appear to be unfunded?):
 - occasional twilight and nocturnal walks
 - link nursery, educational and technical teams
 - inviting garden clubs and horticultural societies to meet at the WBG and make use of the facilities
 - link into national curriculum-based programs of science, history and sustainability
- We support development of an integrated cafe and visitors centre, with a primary objective of encouraging increased, and more environmentally aware, visitorship to the WBG, not of commercial gain. We are agnostic about the location but believe that no additional clearing of vegetation should be undertaken to allow such a centre. Could it be part of the redevelopment of the Northfields Depot?

4. Community engagement

- We agree that health and wellbeing is a key benefit of the WBG and its landscape, as climate change impacts on physical and mental health and intensive urbanisation progresses. Suggest that this should be a focus rather than ‘culture and recreation’ as per the diagram on p.21.
- We support most of the other activities here and believe there should be an increased budget allocation to the WBG to support them.

5. Linkages and connectivity

- We do not support the recreation of ‘heritage’ or other views within the WBG. For example, creating a visual line of sight to the glasshouse by ‘opening up’ the temperate garden seems a strange priority (p.18). The cultural heritage of the Illawarra landscape is of immense significance to First Nations people particularly the Wodi Wodi people of the

Dharawal nation, and we believe that this should be a primary focus across the LGA, including at the WBG.

- We wondered if connectivity could be improved by allowing (slow) bike riding on clearly designated paths through the WBG.