Harmony Park

"Risky Play"

Consultation summary report

Prepared by
Deb Piattoni, Landscape Architect
Open Space Design & Development Unit
October 2026

Revision A

Revision A: initial consultation summary: October 2026



Harmony Park – "Risky Play"

Consultation summary report

October 2026

Harmony Park is a large reserve off Gaffney Street in Coburg including a range of facilities (junior and senior playspaces, skate park, basketball court, dog off leash area, picnic areas, to name a few).

Council received a community request for inclusion of "risky play" in the municipality, which we are planning to include as an additional playspace in Harmony Park, to complement existing play areas.

This report provides a summary of the Harmony Park consultation for this new "risky" playspace.

1. Background

This report covers a summary of each consultation stage for the Harmony Park "risky play" project.

As mentioned on Conversations Merri-Bek webpage, the following elements are not negotiable as part of this project:

- The location for the risky play to be determined by Council. That way we can link this area together with adjacent playspaces.
- The footprint for the risky play will be determined by council. This is based on the maximum available space, whilst still leaving circulation space for maintenance vehicles and people.
- Arrangement of any connecting paths around the risky playspace to be determined by council.
- This project only focuses on provision of a risky playspace. Other park upgrades for Harmony Park are not within the current scope of works at this stage.
- We are intending to retain all trees within the risky play area of the reserve, unless they are found to be in poor health.
- The final concept design must fit within the available budget.

Council's Open Space Design and Development unit have conducted one consultation phase to date with the local community near Harmony Park, these consultation stages are:

- Draft Concept Plan Consultation

Council has developed a draft concept plan showing possible risky play elements for the local community to comment on.

- Final Concept Plan Consultation

This final concept plan reflects any modifications to the draft concept plan, incorporating the community's feedback where possible. This final concept plan will close the consultation process, prior to the team proceeding to detailed design.

Consultation timings

Draft concept plan consultation: 31 August – 28 September 2026 (completed)

Final concept plan to be issued: November 2026 (to be confirmed).

For the draft concept plan consultation, postcards were distributed to households within 0.5km of Harmony Park, advising residents that they can provide feedback using Council's website,

https://conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/harmony-park-play. Posters advertising the consultation stage were also displayed near the playspace.

To complete consultation, the Open Space Design and Development team will show the final concept plan incorporating local community feedback and then proceed to detailed design, followed by procurement. We will advise further when construction will be starting and finishing, once we know.

2. Draft Concept Plan Consultation Feedback Findings

Council received 24 feedback responses to the draft concept plan consultation. Overall responses were supportive of this additional type of play as shown on the draft concept plan. Please note that the "risky" playspace has to be accommodated into the area south of the former school in order to link with the other playspaces.

Feedback received has been organised into the following categories (not in order):

- Water play

A few respondents asked for water play to be included with the "risky" playspace. Unfortunately this is not possible as we have limited budget and allocated space to implement this first instance of "risky play" in our municipality.

- Shade trees

Some respondents asked for additional shade trees over the "risky" playspace. If it is possible to incorporate, we can look at providing additional trees though only if trees can fit into the available space without being within the impact zones of each play item. We do not have sufficient budget to provide any shade sails or similar over this playspace.

- Not risky enough

A couple of respondents mentioned that the draft concept plan for the "risky play" did not provide sufficient elements. They mentioned the Royal Children's Hospital, Carlton Gardens and Southbank as examples of what they would expect. Whilst we recognise how wonderful these example spaces are, they are multi-million-dollar projects and far in excess of our available funds for this additional space at this time. One respondent mentioned a ropes access course, climbing structures, slack lines and rope bridges as examples to include. Similarly another person asked if we could swap the climbing logs to something else. We will look at refining the concept plan to include some of these elements in place of some of those shown, where they can be accommodated.

- Seating

One individual asked for seating near this playspace. We are intending to include a platform seat (to support multiple users) near this area but did not show this on the draft concept plan. We will ensure that this is shown on the revised concept plan.

- Include "risky play" elements for older children as well

One person asked for this playspace to support older teenagers as well. Whilst it does not exclude older teenagers, this "risky" playspace is mainly aimed at the early to mid-teenage range.

Unfortunately at this stage there is insufficient budget or space to provide more for older children/young adults.

- Possible shed removal

A few respondents asked if the two sheds to the south of the "risky" playspace could be removed. That way we could extend this playspace into this area also.

This is a good question and we are investigating internally if this is possible.

- Bicycle parking around the reserve

One respondent asked for additional bicycle racks around the reserve. Whilst we acknowledge that more of these are needed, they are not within this scope of works for a "risky" playspace. As a separate project (yet to be fully funded and timing to be confirmed), we are intending to provide a number of park infrastructure improvements across Harmony Park, which can include improvements to accessibility and paths, bicycle parking, lawn and garden beds, skate park and playspace upgrades.

- Where is the concept plan

One respondent queried where the concept plan is. We showed this concept plan on posters at site as well as on our Conversations webpage. To make this clearer to follow, we will add the revised concept plan poster on the webpage as well as the graphic map. The Conversations webpage also includes an explanation of "risky play" under the Frequently Asked Questions section.

3. Final Concept Plan

The final concept will next be developed, using feedback received from the draft concept plan. Once ready this can be viewed in the Appendix as well as on the Conversations webpage.

Once this plan has been developed, we will explain the main changes made to the design here.

4. Next Steps

The Open Space Design and Development team will now start working on the final concept plan, incorporating as many revisions as possible. Following completion of the Final Concept Plan, we will present this final concept plan to the local community, both on Council's Conversations webpage as well as posters at site, which will close the consultation. We will then proceed to detailed design and procurement.

5. Further information

Any questions can be directed to Council's Open Space Design & Development Unit via email openspace@merri-bek.vic.gov.au or by phoning 9240 111.

6. Appendix

Below is all feedback received from the community for each stage of consultation for the Harmony Park “risky play” and images of the postcards issued.

7a Draft Concept Plan Consultation





Figure 1: Postcards were issued to households within 0.5km of the reserve.

Below is feedback received for the Harmony Park “risky play” draft concept consultation stage:

Date Submitted	Do you have any feedback about this draft concept plan for “risky play”?
26 September 2026	Looks great. Could you consider some water play and a manual pump?
25 September 2026	Some more trees for shade if possible please
18 September 2026	Looks awesome and a great use of space in the park!! Will the climbing logs get used as much as the other things? Wondering if they should be swapped for something else? Love the slide, tunnels, rocks! Would be great to incorporate some Wurundjeri design elements and learning
14 September 2026	Love the idea but PLEASE add water play for all ages. Kids running through springs especially in summer. Similar to Glenroy water park.
6 September 2026	Great concept, will the sheds be removed as well? Also a playspace for kicking a ball around would be great.
1 September 2026	The proposed equipment doesn’t appear to be risky compared with a normal playground. Suggest looking at the playground next to Royal Children’s hospital or the one at Southbank Boulevard for ideas.
1 September 2026	Not risky enough!! A lot of this sounds fun but really doesn't push the limits enough. How about a ropes access course like at the playground near RCH? Or the large climbing structures they have there too, with logs at different angles? Slacklines, rope bridges, trampolines/bouncy elements... There's more potential out there, don't be boring!
1 September 2026	Thank you for considering risky play, many of the new playgrounds (whilst awesome and we're incredibly grateful for) are a bit lacking in risky play elements. Some large rocks for climbing and jumping off would be great (like at royal park and the south bank playground). Kids love jumping off high things, so some higher rocks that are still 'safe' would be awesome. Love the concept and idea!!!! Looking forward to more risky play areas to cater for my older kids
31 August 2026	This is fantastic. Well done. Please could you also include planting of some nice big shade trees over to top of the play area. Being in harmony park in the summer months feels like you’re in some kind of mad max post-apocalyptic sweltering dusty wasteland. I been spending a lot of time interstate in other parts of Australia recently and it has really shone a light on how much room for improvement there is for our playgrounds in Melbourne. Children and families want playgrounds amongst the trees where we can play all year round. For a Melbourne example of how you could make this playground even better, please see Lincoln square playground in Carlton.
31 August 2026	A very welcome addition to the site
31 August 2026	Bigger risky play area. This looks a little small for how this area gets used
31 August 2026	The Royal park nature play is a great example or risky play spaces
31 August 2026	Where is the concept plan? In order for us to give feedback it would be helpful to see 1. a short rationale for risky play, 2. summary of evidence of benefits long term and short-term on kids/communities according to international literature, and 3. how the draft concepts for play are guided by (or connected to) that evidence. Just above, all I can see are icons! What are we to make of that? - I have no idea. I feel very strongly that risky play is essential to guide kids’ sense of consequences and competence (i.e. test limits) , that is enhances fun, sensual experience and strength, competition and cooperation working together. So I’m really interested in this. Aside from electing to ‘follow’ the progress of this project, I don’t think I’ve been given to the chance to comment intelligently. Have I misunderstood something?

Date Submitted	Do you have any feedback about this draft concept plan for “risky play”?
31 August 2026	Looks good. Great idea. Please include shade over it.
31 August 2026	Please provide some shade and table/seating area near to this new space.
31 August 2026	The design would be better as a linked-up course, similar to the Royal Park Nature Play Playground, Douglas Reserve and Southbank Boulevard Playspace. Children prefer extended challenges, rather than individual small challenges. I don't see there being lasting play on the proposed design
31 August 2026	It looks really exciting!
31 August 2026	This is very exciting and looks excellent. There is a puzzling lack of bike parking at Harmony. (Only over by the skate/BMX section). Would much appreciate some!
31 August 2026	It would be great to include risky play opportunities for older children.
31 August 2026	It would be great to include risky play opportunities for older children.
31 August 2026	We welcome this play space for our grandchildren. Finding play spaces that encourage children to take risks in a controlled and supervised environment better prepares them for when they are faced with peer encouraged risks where no control or supervision exists. Well done.
31 August 2026	I love the concept! Think it’s really great and what this park needs, especially in addition to what the park already has! However the location of it at the park is its problem in my mind. With construction of the new kinder starting soon, and the 2 old sheds there…. I feel like this spot might not be the right one. Are the sheds staying… being repurposed??? I also feel like it should be moved a bit more away from the fence and street! There is also no seating for parents in that part of the park and isn't super viewable from other existing seats! The shelter feels pretty far away from most of the things and there’s not clear line of sight to all areas of the park from there…. so putting this new park out of view of the shelter doesn’t help parents who may be utilising the BBQ and cooking dinner while kids are playing for example.
31 August 2026	The proposal looks great! Amazing to see more adventure play, individual play spaces that will excite and draw locals and surrounding neighbourhoods

7b Final Concept Plan

The final concept plan will be shown here as well as on the Conversations webpage for Harmony Park “risky play”.