

Barwon Women's and Children's project

Community consultation
summary report

October 2024



Introduction

The Victorian Government is investing more than \$500 million to deliver new and expanded women's and children's facilities in Geelong.

The new Barwon Women's and Children's will provide world-class women's health (including maternity) and paediatric facilities and deliver additional capacity to ensure the local community can continue to access the very best care, close to home.

Managed by Barwon Health, the new Barwon Women's and Children's will be built within the University Hospital Geelong precinct. It will provide:

- more maternity inpatient beds
- more paediatric multi-day/same day inpatient beds
- more special care nursery cots
- more birthing suites
- more operating theatres
- expanded paediatric and maternity specialist (outpatient) facilities.



Artist impression

Purpose of the report

The Victorian Health Building Authority, in partnership with Barwon Health, commenced community consultation and engagement for the Barwon Women's and Children's project in September 2023.

The purpose of this report is to provide:

- an overview of how we engaged with the community;
- a summary of what we heard across all forums; and
- next steps in the design process.

The community's influence

Community input was sought on topics including the community's aspirations and values, accessibility, wayfinding, cultural safety, and the look and feel of the new Barwon Women's and Children's.

The project team heard a range of ideas and priorities through various channels including the Barwon Women's and Children's Community Consultative Committee, an online survey, and workshops with key stakeholder groups.

The input captured from the community has been shared with the project team and architects for consideration as they develop the designs for the Barwon Women's and Children's project.

Snapshot of engagement

Over **600 contributions**, ideas, and priorities were captured to help inform the design of the new Barwon Women's and Children's.

This included:



422 responses to the community survey on Engage Victoria with a focus on indoor and outdoor spaces, wayfinding and cultural inclusion.



Targeted workshops with representatives from the LGBTIQ+ community, past patients and consumers, and people with a lived disability.



Detailed input and ideas from the project's Community Consultative Committee.



A workshop with First Nations consumers and a series of guided walks on Wadawurrung Country led by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.



Workshops with over 70 Cultural and Linguistically Diverse community members, speaking six different languages – including Arabic, Karen, Karenni, Dari, Congolese and Swahili.

How we engaged

We heard from people from across Geelong and surrounding communities through the following forums and channels to ensure they could have their say on this important project.

Barwon Women's and Children's Community Consultative Committee

The Barwon Women's and Children's Community Consultative Committee was a key forum for maximising community input into the design process for the Barwon Women's and Children's.

Committee members were selected through an Expression of Interest process to ensure representation from a diverse cross-section from Geelong and surrounding areas.

Chaired by the Member for Geelong Christine Couzens, the committee were joined by representatives from Barwon Health, the City of Greater Geelong, and local First Nations groups to have their say on the project.

Across a series of meetings, commencing in September 2023, the group provided detailed input into key areas of the new facility including patient and visitor experience and the look and feel through open dialogue and collaboration.

"I have so much respect for all of the views shared in the meetings and appreciate that it opens up my eyes to issues I'm not aware of or wouldn't usually consider. I also feel that any of my ideas have been accepted and valued – it's important that all voices are heard, and I think the entire committee does a great job of respecting everyone's point of view." – Community Consultative Committee member

Online community survey

An online survey was open from 24 October to 24 November 2023 on the Victorian Government platform, [Engage Victoria](#). It provided an opportunity for all community members to have their say on the project.

Respondents to the survey provided input on key areas of the design of the new Barwon Women's and Children's including patient and family experience, indoor and outdoor spaces, accessibility, and wayfinding.

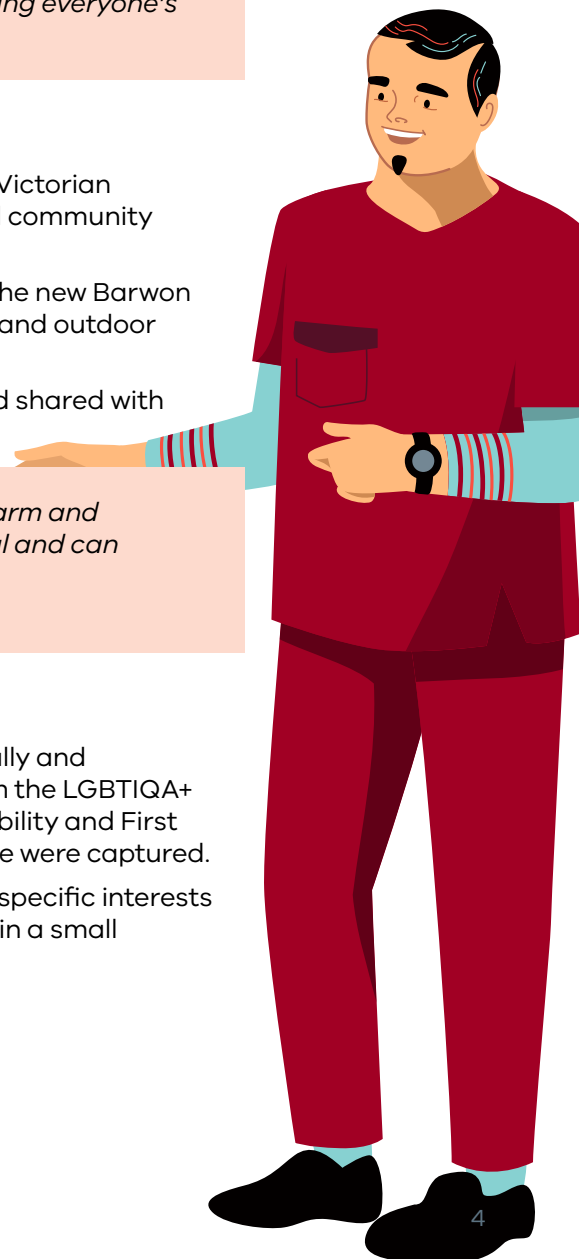
The online survey, which was promoted across social media channels and shared with community and stakeholder groups, attracted 422 responses.

"It would be lovely to see something at Barwon Health that creates a warm and welcoming space for children, rather than something that is too clinical and can become easily overwhelming and frightening for them." – Community survey participant

Targeted workshops

In November 2023, a series of targeted workshops were held with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community members, representatives from the LGBTIQ+ community, past patients, consumers, people with a lived and living disability and First Nations consumers to ensure that the views and priorities of these people were captured.

The workshops were designed to provide an opportunity for groups with specific interests and needs to have their say on the new Barwon Women's and Children's in a small group setting.



Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) workshops

Over 70 cultural and linguistically diverse community members, speaking six different languages – including Arabic, Karen, Karenni, Dari, Congolese and Swahili – provided valuable input into the project through workshops held at the Cultura Northern Community Hub in Geelong on 22 November 2023.

The participants worked through translators to share their ideas and experiences around patient experience at the new facility.

LGBTIQA+, past patients and consumer workshops

Two online workshops were held online on 28 November and 29 November 2023 – one with representatives from the LGBTIQA+ community, and one with past patients, people with a disability and consumers.

Participants were asked to share their experiences and ideas on what would make them feel safe, supported, welcome, and represented when visiting the new Barwon Women's and Children's.

"It would be good to avoid binary colours in birthing suites like traditional pink and blue."
– LGBTIQA+ workshop participant

First Nations engagement

First Nations community engagement is an important part of the design process and will be key in refining key areas of the Barwon Women's and Children's such as access and amenity, interior design, the external look and feel, and landscaping.

In March 2024, a workshop was held with First Nations consumers seeking their input into key areas of the design, along with general feedback on what they would like to see in this development.

In May and June 2024, representatives from the Victorian Health Building Authority, Barwon Health and the project design team attended On Country visits with Wadawarrung Traditional Owners.

Further workshops with First Nations representatives will take place throughout the year to help shape the final designs.

This engagement is being led by Barwon Health, together with the Victorian Health Building Authority.

"Partner beds are very important. Aboriginal women can find health settings very triggering and stressful, so it is important there is a space for a friend or partner to accompany them." – First Nations consumer workshop participant



Community engagement timeline



What we heard

Below is a summary of what we heard throughout the community engagement and consultation period, across all channels and forums.

Accessibility

Preference for:

- Adequate ramps and rails
- Good visibility at night
- Access to safe bike parking
- Proximity to public transport and carparking
- Taxi rank and drop off, pick up zone close to the entrance
- Accessibility for prams, wheelchairs and people with different mobility throughout the facility
- Easy access to outdoors and other areas.

Signage and wayfinding

Preference for:

- Clear and easy to understand signage and maps outside the building, and throughout the interior
- Signage and information in multiple languages and formats
- Signage for visually impaired people
- Gender inclusive signage
- Interactive maps and digital screens
- Use of symbols, colours and themes to help people navigate their way around.

Welcoming spaces

Preference for:

- Capturing the spirit of the Barwon region, including the cultural identity and the history of the region
- Conveying a connection to the diverse local landscape and landmarks
- Consideration and representation of Geelong's multicultural communities
- Consideration and representation LGBTIQA+ community
- An entry and main foyer that is inclusive, and fosters a sense of belonging
- Good acoustic design that creates a sense of calmness
- Adequate security that makes visitors feel safe
- Colour and décor that creates a calm, welcoming and inclusive feeling and captures the diversity of the community
- Waiting spaces that feel modern and comfortable
- Following flagpole protocol.



Indoor spaces

Preference for:

- Child-friendly spaces and activities to entertain and distract
- Comfortable seating and waiting areas for both adults and children
- Breastfeeding-friendly areas with subdued lighting
- Family lounge with tea and coffee amenities
- Consideration of entertainment and activities for children of different ages and different needs
- Availability of phone and laptop chargers and access to powerpoints and charging stations
- Strong and reliable WiFi connection
- Adequate lighting in rooms and waiting areas
- Comfortable temperature
- Gender-inclusive toilets
- Spaces for private conversations
- Spaces that consider the needs of diverse multicultural communities
- Consideration of neurodiversity and different sensory experiences
- Consideration of both parent/child needs and clinician needs for room furnishings
- Seamless integration of old and new.

Outdoor spaces

Preference for:

- Lush, calming green spaces
- Adequate seating outdoors
- Shade and weather protection
- Soothing garden areas and water features
- Integration with green spaces and access to gardens
- Connection to landscape from waiting areas
- Indoor greenery.

First Nations

Preference for:

- Healing spaces for Aboriginal women and children
- Sensitivity towards differing experiences of men and women in Aboriginal culture
- Representation of Aboriginal culture throughout the look and feel and design elements of the facility
- Acknowledgement of Aboriginal heritage and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in the main entrance area
- Incorporation of elements to educate visitors about local Aboriginal culture
- Connection to outdoor spaces and landscape to see the sky and feel the land.



What we're doing next

The Barwon Women's and Children's project is currently in the design development phase, and the feedback received across all channels and forums will be considered as the design process continues throughout 2024.

Further community consultation will continue throughout the year, including additional workshops with First Nations representatives and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.

Final designs for the Barwon Women's and Children's are expected to be completed in late 2024, along with the commencement of main works.

The Victorian Health Building Authority and Barwon Health are committed to keeping the community informed and will continue to provide updates as the project progresses.

If you would like to sign up to the project mailing list, email us at bwcproject@health.vic.gov.au



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