



Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment Concept Design Engagement Report

July 2020

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Executive Summary

In line with the *Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment Stakeholder Engagement Plan - December 2019*, Council's Project Team, together with BKK KTA Architects, conducted an extensive engagement program on the concept design of the new performing arts centre, associated car park and surrounding precinct between late February and early April 2020.

The purpose of the engagement program was to gather feedback from key stakeholders and the wider community to inform development of the schematic design.

Whitehorse Centre clients and patrons, community groups, businesses, education providers, local residents, special interest groups and members of the Whitehorse community were provided with opportunities to provide their feedback through workshops, briefings and drop-in sessions, via feedback forms and the Your Say Whitehorse online consultation portal.

Sixty-eight people attended the face-to-face sessions and nine written submissions were received from members of the Whitehorse community. Feedback was also received from the Whitehorse Reconciliation Committee, Disability Advisory Committee and Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee.

Key themes and topics that arose consistently across all engagement forums included:

- **access** – ease and convenience of access throughout the precinct, performing arts centre and car park for people with mobility issues, and good lighting of all areas
- **car parking** – ensuring an adequate number of parking spaces and appropriate allocation of spaces for different uses
- **proscenium theatre** – a high standard and suitability of seating, rake and sightlines, convenient position of exits, easy and convenient operation of the orchestra pit, lighting and fly mechanisms, and appropriate size of stage, wings and storage areas
- **studio** – good flexibility of uses and comfort of seating
- **back of house** – centralised location of the green room, adequate corridor widths for access, flexible spaces for storage, cast and dressing rooms
- **front of house** – ensuring that the location and access to the box office/bar optimises service delivery, safety and sightlines, and facilitates the smooth movement of people in the foyer, adequate size of foyer
- **function rooms** – ensuring good accessibility, flexibility of configuration and availability of audio-visual opportunities
- **amenities** – ensuring an adequate number and convenient location of toilets, including accessible toilets
- **storage** – ensuring adequate front and back of house storage for bar, kitchens, equipment and the like
- **loading zone** – appropriate size and ease of access to stage door and back of house
- **sustainability measures and recycling opportunities** – ensuring these are pursued where possible.

Council will conduct further engagement throughout the schematic and detailed design phases of the project to inform the final design.

Introduction

About the Project

The Whitehorse Centre is Council's performing arts and cultural venue, and a beloved community facility, attracting over 100,000 attendees and 40,000 festival goers annually. However, now more than 30 years old, it is nearing the end of its functional working life.

Whitehorse City Council is transforming the ageing Whitehorse Centre into a highly accessible, flexible and contemporary venue that will provide an expanded array of arts and cultural opportunities for the entire Whitehorse community to enjoy for generations to come.

Council recognises that arts and culture are as important to mental health and wellbeing as sport and recreation are to physical health and wellbeing. That's why it is making this important and strategic investment in the future for all Whitehorse residents, and to achieve Council's arts and cultural vision "to be a creative community that is vibrant, diverse and engaged through our arts, culture and heritage".

With this in mind, Council has embarked upon an extensive program of engagement with key stakeholders and the wider community to inform the design of a modern facility for the Whitehorse community.

Understanding the enormous value of the Whitehorse Centre to the entire Whitehorse community—for local performing arts groups, schools, community groups, private hirers and commercial users as well as the loyal patrons—planning for a new facility began in 2010.

A comprehensive business case, cost benefit analysis of the options, and extensive community consultation informed Council's decision to fully redevelop the Whitehorse Centre into a venue that will serve the needs of the community into the long-term future.

The new centre will remain, first and foremost, a community arts and cultural facility while still attracting high quality national and international product. An estimated 80 per cent of usage will come from community groups and community-based Council programs such as the Whitehorse Centre professional season, midweek matinee season, sports awards and women's forum, among others.

The redevelopment delivers:

- 600-seat auditorium with larger stage and modern backstage area
- 200-seat studio theatre enabling smaller scale works
- multipurpose rehearsal/dance studio
- a greatly expanded range of shows, functions and events
- improved soundshell for community festivals and other outdoor events
- improved car parking, enabling easy and convenient access to the Whitehorse Centre, library, Council offices, local parkland and the nearby Walker Park sports precinct.

Following permanent closure of the Whitehorse Centre in August 2020, demolition will occur from September 2020. Construction works will commence in 2021 with an expected project completion in late 2023.

Engagement Purpose

Council's Project Team, together with BKK KTA Architects, engaged with key stakeholders and the community on the concept design of the new performing arts centre, car park and surrounding precinct between 25 February and 4 April 2020.

The purpose of the engagement was to gather feedback to inform development of the schematic design.

A variety of opportunities were provided for people to contribute their views and ideas on the concept plan and find out more about the project.

There will be further engagement opportunities throughout the schematic and detailed design phases of the project to inform the final design.

About this Report

This report summarises the feedback received during the engagement period.

It is available online at www.whitehorsecentre.com.au/whitehorse-centre-redevelopment or in hard copy by contacting the Project Team via email to whitehorsecentre.redevelopment@whitehorse.vic.gov.au or by phone on 9262 6357.

Engagement Program

Participants

People who provided their feedback on the concept design included:

- **Whitehorse Centre key clients** - long-standing clients with multiple week-long bookings of the centre
- **Current and potential future clients** – existing and potential future clients, business groups, community groups, education providers
- **Patrons** – including previous consultees and other patrons of the Whitehorse Centre
- **Precinct stakeholders** – neighbouring and other local residents, library staff, a Walker Park sports group
- **Special interest groups** – Whitehorse Reconciliation Committee, Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee, Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee
- **Whitehorse community** – residents and other members of the community

People associated with the project who played a role or attended the engagement sessions included representatives of:

- Whitehorse Arts and Cultural Services team
- Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment Project Team
- BKK/KTA Architects
- Marcomms Australia

A number of the engagement sessions were attended by Whitehorse City Council councillors, including:

- Whitehorse Mayor Cr Sharon Ellis
- Cr Prue Cutts
- Cr Raylene Carr
- Cr Ben Stennett
- Cr Bill Bennett

Implementation

Overview

The concept design engagement program was delivered in line with the *Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment Stakeholder Engagement Plan - December 2019*, available at www.whitehorsecentre.com.au/whitehorse-centre-redevelopment

A variety of engagement formats were provided to ensure everyone in the Whitehorse community - Whitehorse Centre clients and patrons, special interest groups, community groups, businesses, local residents and members of the wider community - had an opportunity to provide their input on the concept design.

These formats included:

- in-person – workshops, briefings , drop-in sessions, Zoom meetings
- in writing – feedback form, email
- online – submission via the Your Say Whitehorse online consultation portal

Process

Key stakeholders were invited to participate in dedicated sessions based on their connection with / potential interest in the Whitehorse Centre redevelopment. Members of the general Whitehorse community were also invited to participate in the engagement process through face-to-face and online opportunities.

The workshops and briefing sessions were independently facilitated and scribed by Marcomms Australia. Small group discussions conducted as part of the sessions were led by the Project Team and BKK KTA Architects, and scribed by Marcomms Australia.

All stakeholders and members of the community who attended a face-to-face session were provided with an information kit which contained:

- a letter from the Mayor of the City of Whitehorse
- project overview and timeframe
- architects' design statement
- architects' concept design of the performing arts centre, open double-storey car park and site plan
- feedback form.

The information kit was also published on Council's Your Say Whitehorse online consultation portal.

A two-stage engagement process was conducted for the key clients' group (long-standing clients with multiple week-long bookings of the centre) and current and potential future clients' group. This enabled these groups to provide initial feedback at a face-to-face workshop then further feedback upon review of the concept design information kit.

The first stage included a face-to-face three-hour workshop and, owing to COVID-19 restrictions, the second stage included a video conference and/or written submission.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, special interest groups were given a copy of the concept design information kit and advised that feedback could be provided in writing (feedback form, email or online portal). The special interest groups also had the option of a presentation and feedback session via teleconference with the Design Team and Project Team.

Communications Program

The table below details the key communication activities conducted to raise awareness of the opportunities to participate in the concept design engagement program.

Stakeholders	Mediums	Tactics
Specific groups	Email invitation	Identified stakeholders were invited to attend a workshop or briefing session. Special interest groups were provided with a copy of the concept design information kit.
Broader community	Whitehorse Update	Invitation to participate published in Whitehorse Update advertorial in the Whitehorse Leader
	Media release	Media release issued to the Whitehorse Leader and uploaded to Council's website
	Social media	Posts inviting the community to participate were published on the Whitehorse Centre Facebook page and Whitehorse City Council Facebook page
	Websites	Invitation to participate was published on the Whitehorse Centre website and Council website
	Whitehorse Centre ENews	Article published in the Whitehorse Centre Enews publication

Engagement Sessions

The following table details the engagement program sessions and other feedback opportunities.

Date	Stakeholder Group	Area of Interest	No.	Format
3 Mar	Key clients – stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utassy Ballet School • Babirra Music Theatre • Whitehorse Centre Showtime 	6	Workshop
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nova Music Theatre 	1	Meeting
3 Mar	Precinct stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nunawading Library • Nunawading Gymnastics & Sports Club • Local residents 	17	Briefing
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local resident 	1	Written submission
4 Mar	Current clients and potential future clients – stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nova Music Theatre • Arts Nunawading • Combined Rotary Clubs of Whitehorse • Box Hill Ballet Association • Whitehorse Band • Federation of Victorian Film Societies • Whitehorse Film Society • Autism Family Support Association • Probus Club of Mitcham Orchards • Nadrasca • Asian Business Association of Whitehorse 	20	Workshop
5 Mar	Patrons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current patrons of the Whitehorse Centre 	7	Workshop

12 Mar	General community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents and other members of the Whitehorse community 	4	Drop-in session
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eastern District Aquarium Society 	1	Written submission
14 Mar	General community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents and other members of the Whitehorse community 	11	Drop-in session
31 Mar	Key clients – stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utassy Ballet School Babirra Music Theatre 	2	Video conference
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utassy Ballet School Nova Music Theatre Whitehorse Showtime 	3	Written submissions
1 April	Current and future potential clients – stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probus Club of Mitcham Orchards 	1	Written submissions
14 Mar-4 April	General community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Whitehorse community 	3	Written submissions via Your Say Whitehorse portal
1 Apr	Special interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee 	1	Written submission
22 April		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee 	10	Video conference
11 June		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whitehorse Reconciliation Committee 	6	Video conference

Key Findings

Sixty-eight people attended the face-to-face sessions and nine written submissions were received from members of the Whitehorse community. Feedback was also received from the Whitehorse Reconciliation Committee, Disability Advisory Committee and Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee.

Key themes and topics that arose consistently across all engagement forums included:

- **access** – ease and convenience of access throughout the precinct, performing arts centre and car park for people with mobility issues, and good lighting of all areas
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- **sustainability measures and recycling opportunities** – ensuring these are pursued where possible.

Discussion Summaries

This section summarises the feedback provided by stakeholders and the wider community on the concept design across all mediums – face-to-face, feedback forms, emails and online submissions.

Key Clients

The following summarises the key themes/topics raised by key clients in the workshop and via video conference and written submission. The topics are presented in alphabetical order.

Back of House

- **Dressing rooms:** Participants indicated that it would be ideal to have a designated children's dressing room, designated male and female changing rooms, access to a large amount of changing room space for particular performances.
- **Green room:** There was strong support for locating the green room closer to the proscenium theatre, as this would be more central for both theatres and closer to the stage. Participants advised that the green room would be expected to be in use before, during and after performances. A kitchenette would allow for refreshments.
- **Mic room:** It was highlighted that the mic room needs to be close to the stage.
- **Sewing/drying facilities:** Some participants advised that for performances they generally have a sewing team with two or three machines. They currently use a dressing room for sewing and clothes drying is currently done offsite.
- **Corridor widths:** Participants highlighted the need for wide corridors and suggested widening of the corridor on the OP side to allow for consistent widths.
- **Musicians' room:** Participants praised the inclusion of a self-sufficient musicians' room.
- **Grand piano:** The proposed central location of grand piano was supported.

Car Parking

- Participants highlighted the need for an adequate number of car spaces.

Design

- Participants expressed the view that it is important for the leadlight glass to be incorporated and visible in the new centre.

Foyer and Box Office/Bar

- Participants highlighted the need for enough space in the foyer and location and layout of the box office and bar to ensure that people can be served and move on easily to avoid queuing and congestion.
- It is important for people in the foyer to be able to mix and be served refreshments quickly (average interval is 20 minutes, so ideally people would be served in first 10 minutes).

Function Rooms

- Participants supported the function rooms providing for different uses and capacities.

Loading Zone

- There was strong support for the loading zone to provide the best possible access from truck to the stage. It was highlighted that the loading dock needs to allow for a 16m truck size and the scene dock loading bay needs to be at the standard height of the truck trays. Turning circles are also important to allow enough room for large trucks to back up to the dock.
- It was highlighted that door heights and widths should enable sets to be brought in without needing to dismantle.
- Some participants asked if the loading dock could allow for truck access similar to Bunjil Theatre which is internal to the building.

Orchestra Pit

- Some participants highlighted the need for a pit that would cater for 25 players, with elevation for percussion, and elevation and adequate space for the conductor, as well as access to a conductor stand and audio and TV feed.
- There was a preference indicated for the entire pit to be liftable by hydraulic lift, to various settings, including to stage height.
- Some participants highlighted the need for appropriate and easy access for musicians to the orchestra pit and to musicians' rooms, as well as easy access to and from the pit from backstage with consideration of emergency evacuations.

Outside Areas

- Participants expressed a desire for facilities (such as tables, seating, BBQ facilities, picnic areas) to be provided to encourage use of outdoor spaces, particularly when there is a matinee session and then an evening session. They would like to encourage young people to stay and use the area.

Proscenium Theatre

Dimensions/space

- Participants supported a wide arch width (prefer wider than the current proposed width of 12m) to attract professional dance companies.
- One participant highlighted the need for the stage height to be higher than the current centre and also for wing doors to be the same height as the proscenium, and to be wide enough to allow for movement of sets around corners.
- Participants highlighted that the proposed design allows for more space on one wing than the other. There was support for wing space to be equal on either side (e.g. 6m each side). They highlighted a need for 5m+ either side to accommodate sets and legs.
- One participant felt that the wing space on the OP side seems to be a little tight and should be expanded.
- One participant highlighted the need for the east wing to be the height of the proscenium and for the fly gallery to be positioned well off stage and high enough so that it does not obstruct scenery movement on the OP side.
- One participant highlighted the need for space for the stage manager on the prompt side that gives them a clear view of the stage.

Seating and sightlines

- Some participants expressed interest in the seating style and rake. A participant pointed out that in the old centre the rake is too gentle, making it difficult for children to see.
- Views were expressed about sightlines from the widest seats and from the back rows. Current sightlines mean widest seats (last row of first set – before aisle) would have a partial view. Prefer to have no seats with diminished views.
- One participant highlighted the need for audiences to be able to see most of the upstage area and not see offstage (into the wings and overhead flies and lighting area).
- Participants pointed out that raking needs to be such that the audience can see dance patterns. Aspect is important for the audience experience.
- Participants were divided on preference for continental seating or centre aisle seating.
- Some participants asked about the impacts of seating style and a single-level theatre on the intimate feel of the theatre. Some felt that intimacy is better with two levels (dress circle). One participant suggested that the theatre could be smaller but with two levels of seating – which would achieve a smaller footprint, more intimate space, better sightlines.

Lighting and fly mechanism

- While participants didn't have a particular preference for a mechanical or computerised fly mechanism, the point was made that the system must be able to bring in and take out scenery as fast and as safely as possible, and be able to operate at various speeds.

- One participant stressed that the fly tower height is critical and must allow for scenery to be fully flown up so that it is not visible from the audience. The 'rule of thumb' is for the fly tower to be double the height of the proscenium
- Participants advised that the weight capacity for the lighting bar should be at least 400kg.
- There was a preference expressed for the lighting bars to be on powered winches for safety of loading and unloading.
- There was a preference for four follow spots on the front catwalk and space for two operators.
- One participant expressed a preference for two front of house lighting bars. The ideal angle for lighting is 45 degrees. Bars should be spaced to provide lighting for the forestage and further upstage without spilling into the top of the proscenium.
- One participant highlighted the need for front of house perches at both sides of the stage, which can be safely and easily accessed by crew.

Rehearsal Studio

- A participant highlighted particular needs associated with the rehearsal studio including:
 - size should be made larger to enable examinations to be held in the space. AEC and the Royal Academy of Dance require examination studios to be a minimum 10m x 10m
 - toilets and change areas need to be contained within the ballet zone and separate male and female spaces are required
 - a waiting space is needed for parents and children arriving so they don't come straight into studios
 - preference for a sprung floor, access to an upright piano and noise attenuation measures.

Stage Door

- Participants advised that standard theatre practice is to have one entry for all via the stage door. They would like to have one check-in point at the stage door so that they know who is there and for security purposes.
- Participants suggested the need for a shelter external to the stage door for when parents pick up their children.

Studio Theatre/Soundshell

- Participants raised concerns about the style of retractable seats in the studio theatre.
- Participants suggested that the quality and comfort of the seats, with good leg room, needs to be considered and that separate seats are much preferred over benches.
- One participant highlighted the need for the lighting grid in the studio to provide flexibility and adequate LX outlets.

- One participant expressed interest in using the studio space for changerooms or gathering space when large performances were being held and being able to cordon off the corridor next to the studio. The participant also requested another door for access from back of house to the studio to allow access between the upstairs rehearsal space to the theatre during rehearsal / performance time.
- Interest was expressed in refurbishing and using the soundshell door artwork in the new centre.

Toilets

- A participant highlighted the need for enough toilets to deliver a high level of service in short periods such as interval.

Precinct Stakeholders

The following summarises the key themes/topics raised by the precinct stakeholders in the workshop and via written submission. The topics are presented in alphabetical order.

Car Parking

- Participants highlighted that car parking is a major issue for them, explaining that currently parking is inadequate, particularly when Walker Park is in use, and drivers park in residential streets.
- Participants raised suggestions such as adding an extra level to the car park instead of using the overflow parking area and encouraging Council staff to park elsewhere (e.g. Walker Park). One participant suggested planting trees to stop residents viewing a raised car park.
- A participant raised concerns about accessing the arts centre from the car park in the rain and suggested that there be a covered walkway from the car park to the entrance.
- A participant asked if Council could approach Victoria Police to use their land for additional parking.
- A participant expressed concerns about the safety of having car parks next to walkways and raised the potential for reversing drivers to not see small children.
- A participant expressed concern about the location of the overflow car park near residents' back fences and suggested that car parking should be located away from residents and closer to Whitehorse Road.

Bathrooms

- Participants supported the inclusion of more toilets than the current centre.

Loading Zone

- Participants raised concerns about the proximity of the loading dock to nearby homes and the need for a buffer to minimise noise when trucks come in early and late.

Sustainability

- Participants expressed support for sustainability measures to be incorporated in the design, such as solar panels, and to aim for 5-star rating.
- There was concern expressed about how much of the demolished building would go to landfill and a desire to look for opportunities to recycle wherever possible.

Current and Potential Future Clients

The following summarises the key themes/topics raised by current and potential future clients in the workshop and via written submission. The topics are presented in alphabetical order.

Back of House/Stage door

- Participants highlighted the importance of space flexibility given the various uses that need to be accommodated and the need to close off areas and manage access.
- It was suggested that the green room be positioned in a more central location rather than in the corner as shown on the current plan.

Car Parking

- Access to and use of the car park was a high priority for all.
- One participant noted that with adequate car spaces, accessibility to the centre should be good and should address the current situation of needing to park past the police station or in the shopping centre.
- One participant was concerned that the carpark top level being open to the weather would make it difficult for people to get to the performing arts centre in the wet. They suggested putting a roof and a rooftop garden on the carpark.
- There was a request that parking, access and mobility within the precinct remain a priority during the construction period.
- One participant requested dedicated parking for backstage people.
- One participant highlighted the need for access to Walker Park car spaces.

Catering/Kitchen Facilities

- The need for flexibility in catering arrangements was highlighted by some participants. They advised that there will be times when they need cooking facilities

and want hot food served in the foyer and times when they will want to BYO food for small events (rather than using centre catering).

Foyer/Box Office

- Concerns were raised about the size of the foyer and location of the box office/bar, and the ability to accommodate and serve people when there are many people using the centre at the same time.
- There was support for the box office/bar to be located and designed to ensure there is good visibility and access, and to minimise queuing.
- Seating in the foyer was seen as highly desirable.

Function Rooms

- There was a desire for optimal natural light into the function areas so that there is an open feel when there are events such as conferences.
- A participant raised the need for AV to be available in the function rooms.

Lifts

- A participant suggested that another lift was needed within the centre, pointing out that elderly people can't walk long distances.
- One participant expressed the view that the lift will prove to be a needed facility for the elderly.

Operations

- Concern was raised about the future costs associated with attending and using the new centre.
- One participant requested that regular user groups be given preference when booking spaces.

Precinct

- One participant stated their approval of the precinct.
- The need for adequate lighting in the car park and precinct was raised.
- Some participants suggested that covered areas/shelters around the building and car park would be good during bad weather.

Promotional Opportunities

- Concern was raised about community noticeboards in the municipality being removed and a need for new opportunities to promote group activities.

- There was a suggestion for the new centre to have a dedicated noticeboard or glassed cabinet for promotional posters and marketing materials to advertise their group activities.
- Some would like opportunities for art displays and art and craft activities in the new centre.

Proscenium Theatre

Accessibility

- Some participants raised concerns about ease and speed of access to, and exit from, the theatre. One participant felt that two exits is not enough as it is currently slow to get people out of the theatre and asked if it would be possible to add an exit at the bottom of the theatre.
- A participant suggested that two entrances to the orchestra pit would be good.
- A participant suggested the need for technology to assist people with hearing impairment.

Seating

- The need for a theatre with adequate capacity was highlighted.
- Participants were divided in their support for different seating styles. Some preferred continental, others indicated a preference for a centre aisle. However, good sight lines for all members of the audience was seen as important to all.

Storage

- Onsite storage for community groups that are regular users of the centre was seen as highly desirable by some participants.
- A concern was raised about the adequacy of storage space in the side wings of the stage.

Soundshell

- The need for lighting bars for the soundshell was raised.

Studio

- Participants expressed a desire for comfortable, retractable seating, with some saying that in their experience it is often uncomfortable.
- It was requested that the studio be of a height to enable screens for films to be raised and that acoustic design for films be considered.
- People were supportive of the studios being multipurpose.

Sustainability/Recycling

- Participants highlighted a desire for the project to consider sustainability measures, including adding solar panels to the new centre, recycling equipment from the old building, and aiming for green building status.

Toilets

- Participants highlighted the need for adequate toilets for women (one participant suggested there should be twice as many toilets for women than men).
- Toilets should be accessible from all spaces.
- There was a suggestion to include a parents' room for changing babies and young children.
- There was support for the Changing Places facility with one participant commenting that the City of Whitehorse is ahead of most councils in this regard.

Patrons

The following summarises the key themes/topics raised by the patrons in the workshop. The topics are presented in alphabetical order.

Back of House

- Participants highlighted the need for more space generally for back of house for dressing rooms and other uses, as well as space to allow for more than one use or performance at a time.

Car Parking

- Participants highlighted the need for enough car spaces to cater for visitors and for priority spaces for people with mobility issues.
- Some participants suggested the need to prevent buses from parking in the car park after dropping off groups as this takes up parking spaces.

Consultation

- A participant suggested that Council should extend consultation to include non-local groups and touring companies.
- A participant supported the need to consult with local Indigenous groups.

Costs

- Participants expressed concerns that the project may go over budget due to inflation.

- Participants supported measures to make the new centre cheaper to run.

Foyer/Movement of People

- Participants highlighted the need for the foyer to be large enough to allow for ease of movement particularly when lots of people arrive at once before a performance.
- There was support for fixed seating in the foyer, particularly for elderly patrons and patrons with limited mobility.

Function Spaces

- Participants supported flexible function spaces and accessibility via stairs and lift.

Loading Zone

- Participants supported loading zone design to prevent trucks having to drive on grassed areas.

Markets and Festivals

- Some participants expressed concern about the likely impacts on the markets and festivals that usually operate from the site.

Proscenium Theatre

Orchestra pit

- Participants were interested in the operation of the orchestra pit, including access to the pit and function when in use and not in use.

Seating

- Participants supported seating layout, spacing and rake that provides the best possible sightlines and access for all.
- Adequate spacing between rows is important for access.
- Distance between stage and front rows of seats is important for sightlines.
- Some participants indicated a preference for a centre aisle, others supported continental layout.

Stage

- Participants asked about the proposed stage area and suggested that given it will be larger than the current stage it may be possible to attract productions with large scenery and complex scenery changes.

Theatre Equipment

- Participants supported the recycling of theatre equipment for re-use in the new centre wherever possible.

Toilets

- Participants highlighted the need for an adequate number of toilets, as well as accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities.

Traffic

- Participants highlighted the need for easier access from the precinct back to Whitehorse Road.

Sheds

- A participant highlighted the need for space for set building and storage onsite, given that the existing sheds are to be removed.

Sustainability

- Some participants expressed a preference for sustainability measures to be incorporated in the new centre, for example carbon-neutral measures, solar panels and LED lighting.

General Community

The following summarises the key themes/topics raised by community members in the drop-in sessions and via written submission. The topics are presented in alphabetical order.

Budget

- Some participants raised concerns about the potential for the project to go over budget and be delayed.
- One participant raised concerns about the costs of construction in a competitive environment – when the state government is undertaking so much construction work costs may be higher.

Car Parking and Access

- A participant highlighted the need to retain access to the precinct via Humphries Avenue.

- Participants highlighted the need for car parking within the precinct to cater for the numbers likely to use the centre.
- One participant raised concerns about the lack of accessible parking within the open double storey car park, in particular for mobility impaired drivers and people with breathing issues. The participant suggested that there should be colour coding and a lift in the car park to assist people with mobility issues, and expressed a view that broader consultation with community members around parking accessibility was needed.
- One participant highlighted the need for accessible parking for people who don't have a disabled parking permit and need to drop off an elderly person and get them out of the car and into a wheelchair.
- One participant raised the need to consider including an electric charging station in the car park.
- One participant expressed a preference for a portico/awning near the entrance or drop off zone or from the car park in case of bad weather (e.g. Ripponlea has portico so you can drive up and drop people off near the door under cover).
- Two participants expressed views that the increased parking is welcome and will cater for the capacity of the centre.
- One participant expressed a preference for not too many cross pathways within the car park.

Consultation

- One participant expressed a view that not enough community members were being consulted about the project, particularly ratepayers. This participant was also concerned about Council complying with the state government requirements for community consultation.
- One participant raised a concern about the consultation being held at a time when lives were being lost to Corona virus.

Design

- One participant raised concerns about the new design plans being different to the original designs and questioned the cost and efficiency of the design approach.

Function Space

- Participants supported the flexibility of function spaces for various uses.
- One participant expressed a need for a space similar to the Waratah Room in size and shape with comfortable seating, access to catering, storage space and AV equipment.
- The need for a lift to the function area was raised.
- A participant raised concerns about the potential for function room hire costs to be higher than they are now.

- One participant expressed a preference for a timber polished dancefloor in the large function room.

Performing Arts Centre

- Participants expressed a preference for siting of the box office to allow for ease of access and support movement of people in the foyer.
- A participant enquired about the placement of the leadlight windows in the new centre and suggested that they should be in a place that gets light. The participant also highlighted the need to take care in the storage of the windows.

Project

- Most participants expressed their support for the project.
- One participant expressed satisfaction with the access to the centre, the variety of internal spaces catering to diverse functions, the capacity of car parking and the proposed external areas being in keeping with the precinct surrounds. The participant noted that the redevelopment offers increased amenity and sound functional design.
- One participant was concerned about the loss of trees from the site due to the new centre being built.
- Two participants expressed a preference to retain the old centre. Their concerns included duplication of community spaces (reference to Nunawading Community Hub under development), Council's ability to pay for the project and the possibility that a new Council would stop the project.
- One participant wanted the project to be stopped, with a preference for money to be provided for people doing it tough.

Proscenium Theatre

- Participants were divided in their preference for seating layout; some prefer a centre aisle for access, others prefer continental style with spacing between rows that allows for easy access.
- One participant expressed a concern about the time it would take to adjust the orchestra pit height, noting that it needed to be quick.
- Participants highlighted the need to ensure that the seating design allows for good sightlines.

Studio

- Participants expressed a preference for high quality, comfortable seats rather than benches.
- One participant highlighted the need to consult with the Film Society as they would likely want to use the studio space.

Special Interest Groups

Engagement with the special interest groups was held in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions.

Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee

The Disability Advisory Committee provided feedback via email on 1 April 2020, raising a number of questions and comments as detailed below.

- Would it be possible to have a screen in the proscenium theatre with captions?
- Are there sufficient disability facilities? Location and number? Backstage area? Lift access from upper car park level? Change rooms and parent rooms?
- Hope this will be an all abilities performing venue with good access for people with disabilities to the back stage and stage areas.
- Are there show seats in the main seating area that could be removed for wheelchairs?
- Does the outside viewing area have easy access for wheelchairs?

Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee

On 22 April 2020, a meeting was held via Zoom with committee members, Project Team and architect representatives. Feedback and issues discussed are detailed below.

Car park

- The car park needs to be accessible and inclusive.

Accessibility

- Accessibility for people with different mobility and visibility issues was highlighted as important.
- The committee indicated that it would support gender neutral toilets to provide a safe and inclusive space for young LGBTIQ+ people.
- A view was expressed that the current Whitehorse Centre is tucked away and people can have trouble knowing where it is. Would like the centre to be more visible from Whitehorse Road.

Design

- Feedback on the design was very positive. There was support for the bricks and curves, earthy colour, homely feel and welcoming design.
- The design was considered impressive for its flexible/multipurpose spaces and accessibility.

- Night lighting for good visibility was raised – lighting can also create a magical feel.
- Design to take into account usability for 12–25 year-olds.
- Design to take into account night safety.
- Sound proofing for rehearsal spaces was raised.
- When in the rehearsal space, it would be good to know what is going on in the performance areas.
- The importance of acoustics and the material used was raised, to make the best performance space (e.g. Deakin Edge - Fed Square, Hamer Hall are awesome).

Facilities/Flexible Spaces

- The committee wanted to know if the building could be used for its events such as youth forums.
- The committee was supportive of the flexible spaces and tiered seating.
- There was support for the larger spaces.
- The studio theatre was viewed as a good space to use.

Whitehorse Reconciliation Committee

On 11 June 2020, a meeting was held via Zoom with committee members, Council Project Team members and the architects. Feedback and issues discussed are detailed below.

Design

- Participants expressed their satisfaction with the concept design.
- Participants expressed support for the way the design fits into the landscape, for example, through organic curved lines.

Indigenous Involvement

- Participants highlighted that there are many ways to incorporate indigenous features into the design of the centre and site, for example, through artwork, totem poles, tucker gardens and spaces, naming of spaces, use of language. The Burwood Bricks shopping centre roof design was cited as an example of an artist's work.
- One participant suggested that the PAC entrance could feature a mural or artwork informing people of the Wurundjeri heritage or that display areas could allow for rotation of artworks from the Council collection.
- Participants expressed a preference for indigenous symbols to be integrated and part of the norm rather than 'applied' to the design.
- One participant noted that there is a visual arts committee that may already be involved in the project. They have a collection of art and should be consulted in terms of artwork.
- One participant asked what Council was doing to engage indigenous businesses in the construction and ongoing operation of the centre.

- One participant noted that indigenous involvement in the ongoing operation of the centre could be discussed in the future, closer to the opening of the new centre.

Landscape

- One participant highlighted the importance of trees to the community and the need to know the number of trees to be removed, replaced, replanted.
- Participants highlighted the role of indigenous plant selection in ensuring diversity in the landscape and supporting local fauna.

Toilets

- One participant highlighted the need for more accessible toilets than are available in the old centre.

Appendices

Appendix I: List of Participants

The following is a list of people who participated in the engagement program, whether at a face-to-face session or via written submission.

Group	Stakeholders
Key Clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babirra Music Theatre • Nova Music Theatre • Whitehorse Showtime • Utassy Ballet School
Current and Potential Future Clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Nunawading • Combined Rotary Clubs of Whitehorse • Box Hill Ballet Association • Whitehorse Band • Federation of Victorian Film Societies • Whitehorse Film Society • Autism Family Support Association • Probus Club of Mitcham Orchards • Nadrasca • Asian Business Association Whitehorse
Patrons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous consultees and a cross-section of other existing patrons
Precinct Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nunawading Library • Nunawading Gymnastics & Sports Club • Local residents
General Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Whitehorse community • Blackburn Calisthenics • Whitehorse Ratepayers Association • Eastern District Aquarium Society
Special Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitehorse Reconciliation Committee • Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee • Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee

Appendix II: Feedback Form

Please provide your comments on the concept design for the Whitehorse Centre redevelopment. The following categories are provided as a guide. You can add comments and pages as needed.

Submit your comments to the Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment Team via email to whitehorsecentre.redevelopment@whitehorse.vic.gov.au by close of business Tuesday 17 March 2020.

Performing Arts Centre

- Accessibility
- Internal areas (e.g. theatres, studios, function spaces, Box Office, foyer, toilets etc)
- External areas (e.g. drop-off zones, landscaping, pathways, leisure zones etc)

Car park

- Accessibility

Precinct

- Amenity
- Accessibility
- Uses
- Functionality
