



Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre Redevelopment

Schematic Design Engagement Report

February 2021

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Executive Summary

In line with the *Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment Stakeholder Engagement Plan - December 2019*, an extensive engagement program was conducted on the Schematic Design between mid-September and mid-November 2020.

The purpose of the engagement program was to gather feedback from key stakeholders and the wider community to inform the Detailed Design of the Whitehorse performing arts centre redevelopment.

To adhere to Council's Election Period Policy, workshops and information sessions with key stakeholders were conducted before the Caretaker Period, from 15 September to 21 September 2020.

Engagement with the broader community occurred following the Caretaker Period, from Wednesday 28 October to Monday 16 November 2020.

Seventy-four stakeholders attended the video conference sessions.

Thirty-six written submissions were received, including 29 from members of the Whitehorse community.

Many of the questions and themes raised by participants in the video conference sessions reflect topics they sought to further understand or clarify, and of importance to them. Questions and matters raised were responded to at the time by a representative of Council's Project Working Group, an architect or relevant specialist in attendance.

Common themes and topics that arose across the engagement program included:

- **Performing arts centre entrance** – need to create a greater sense of arrival
- **Proscenium theatre seating** – there were a range of views on the style of seating
- **Back of house** – the need for flexible spaces and storage was highlighted
- **Foyer** – the importance of layout, spacing and seating to cater for different patrons and performances was highlighted
- **Accessibility** – access for people with mobility issues, from the car park and pathways through to theatre and studio seating
- **Storage** – needed for walkers, prams
- **Rehearsal spaces** – need space for dressing/changing and storage, parent and student waiting and staff areas, flexible spaces
- **Stage door/loading dock** – size and access needs to allow for quick access, particularly for large casts and large costumes
- **Car parking** – consideration of lighting, security, access to centre, number of spaces
- **Sustainability** – support for environmentally-sustainable design (ESD) elements
- **Studio Theatre** – type of floor, accessibility of seating, performance area and wings, were areas of importance
- **Catering** – availability for pre-performance and functions
- **Emergency exits** – needs to be enough exits in case of emergency
- **Funding** – queries about who should fund the project
- **Fountain** – disappointment at demolition of the fountain

Specific comments, suggestions and questions put forward during both the Concept Design and Schematic Design engagement processes were worked through and considered by the Project Working Group, architects and specialist consultants, to inform the next stage of design.

Council will continue to work closely with key stakeholders throughout the Design Development stage to help inform the final design of the new Whitehorse performing arts centre.

Introduction

About the Project

Whitehorse City Council is building a highly accessible, flexible and contemporary Whitehorse performing arts centre 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'.

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.

Research conducted for the independent business case indicated that around 80 per cent of usage of the new centre will be community-based.

The redevelopment delivers:

- 626-seat auditorium with larger stage and modern backstage area
- 200-seat studio theatre enabling smaller scale works
- multipurpose rehearsal/dance studio
- multipurpose function room
- facilities that enable 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 performing arts centre, library, Council offices, local parkland and the nearby Walker Park sports precinct.

The demolition phase was conducted from mid-September to December 2020. Construction works commenced in early 2021 with an expected project completion in late 2023.

Engagement Purpose

Early in 2020, Council's Project Working Group and the architects presented the Concept Design for the new Whitehorse performing arts centre, car park and surrounding precinct to key stakeholder groups and the broader community. Feedback gathered from these sessions informed development of the Schematic Design. Schematic Design is the stage of the project where the design of rooms and spatial requirements of the building are refined.

The Schematic Design was presented to stakeholders and the wider community between 15 September and 16 November 2020. Sessions were delivered via video conference, in line with Victorian Government directives regarding COVID-19. Feedback was also received via the Your Say Whitehorse portal <https://oursay.org/whitehorsecitycouncil> and via email.

To support the engagement process, a Schematic Design information kit was provided to all stakeholder engagement participants and made available online for the broader community.

The purpose of the engagement program was to gather feedback on the Schematic Design to inform the Detailed Design of the Whitehorse performing arts centre redevelopment.

About this Report

This report summarises the feedback received during the Schematic Design 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 0466 864 987.

Engagement Program

Participants

People who provided their feedback on the Schematic Design included:

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

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

- Whitehorse Performing Arts Centre Redevelopment Project Team
- Whitehorse Arts and Cultural Services Team
- BKK Architects and KTA – Lead Design Team
- Schuler Shook – theatre, audio visual and lighting specialists
- Aspect Studios – landscape design specialists
- Marcomms Australia – communications and engagement specialists
- Architecture & Access – accessibility specialists

Implementation

Overview

The Schematic 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

Based on COVID-19 restrictions, a variety of engagement formats were provided to ensure everyone in the Whitehorse community - Whitehorse Centre clients and patrons, special interest groups, community groups, local residents and members of the wider community - had an opportunity to provide their input on the Schematic Design.

These formats included:

- live workshops and information sessions via video conference
- in writing via a feedback form
- online via the Your Say Whitehorse online consultation portal.

Process

To adhere to Council's Election Period Policy, the Schematic Design engagement program was delivered in two stages.

Stage 1

The first stage of engagement was conducted with key stakeholders from 15-21 September 2020, pre-Caretaker period.

Whitehorse Centre clients and patrons, neighbouring residents, precinct stakeholders and special interest groups were invited to participate in dedicated sessions based on their connection with / potential interest in the Whitehorse performing arts centre redevelopment.

The workshops and information sessions were facilitated and scribed by Marcomms Australia.

All stakeholders who attended a live 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' Schematic Design of the performing arts centre, open double-storey car park and site plan
- a feedback form.

Session attendees were invited to provide any additional comments, using the feedback form, by 26 October 2020.

Stage 2

The second stage of engagement was conducted with the wider Whitehorse community between 28 October and 16 November 2020, post-Caretaker period.

Members of the community were able to provide their feedback via Your Say Whitehorse https://oursay.org/whitehorsecitycouncil_. The online portal included a range of information to help people provide their feedback, including a project overview and timeframe, animated "flythrough" of the performing arts centre, car park and surrounding precinct, captioned presentation of the architectural images, plans and illustrations, and an online feedback form.

A second information session via video conference was scheduled for neighbouring residents on 27 October as many had only received their invitation to the first session (pre-Caretaker period) the day prior, owing to a delay by Australia Post. While three invitees advised they would attend the session, no-one attended on the day.

Residents living within 400 metres of the site were sent a letter notifying them of the online feedback opportunity and were also offered a hard copy information kit.

Communications Program

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

Stakeholders	Mediums	Tactics
Specific groups	Email / mail invitation Mail invitation	Identified stakeholders were invited to attend a workshop or information session via video conference. A copy of the Schematic Design information kit was provided to all attendees following the sessions. Local residents were offered a second session via video conference as many did not receive invitations in advance due to Australia Post delays. No-one attended the second session.
Broader community	Social media	Posts inviting the community to participate were published on the Whitehorse Centre Facebook page and Whitehorse City Council Facebook page
	Websites	Information about the engagement process was published on the Whitehorse Centre website and Council website
	Whitehorse Centre ENews	Article published in the Whitehorse Centre Enews
	Project Bulletin	Information about the engagement period was published in a bulletin and circulated widely

Engagement Sessions

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

Date	Stakeholder Group	Area of Interest	No.	Format
16 Sept	Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee members 	12	Information session via video conference
17 Sept	Key clients – stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utassy Ballet School Babirra Music Theatre Whitehorse Showtime Nova Music Theatre 	9	Workshop via video conference
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utassy Ballet School 	2	Meeting via video conference
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utassy Ballet School 	1	Written submission
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nova Music Theatre 	1	Written submission
17 Sept & 27 Oct	<p>Precinct stakeholders</p> <p>A second session was scheduled on 27 Oct for neighbouring residents as letters advising of the first session arrived late due to postal delays.</p> <p>There were no attendees at the second session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbouring residents Precinct stakeholders 	10 0	<p>(17/09) Information session via video conference</p> <p>(27/10) Information session via video conference</p>
18 Sept	Patrons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current patrons of the Whitehorse Centre 	8	Information session via video conference
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual patrons 	3	Written submission
21 Sept	Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee members 	8	Information session via video conference

21 Sept	Current clients and potential future clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business groups, community groups, arts/theatre groups 	25	Information session via video conference
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Box Hill Ballet Association 	2	Written submission
28 Oct-16 Nov	General community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Whitehorse community 	29	Written submissions via Your Say Whitehorse portal and via email

Key Findings

Seventy-four stakeholders attended the video conference sessions, including representatives from the Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee and Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee. (An invitation to provide feedback via a video conference was extended to the Whitehorse Reconciliation Advisory Committee; however, no session was requested.)

Thirty-six written submissions were received, including 29 from members of the Whitehorse community.

Common themes and topics that arose across the engagement program included:

- **Performing arts centre entrance** – need to create a greater sense of arrival
- **Proscenium theatre seating** – there were a range of views on the style of seating
- **Back of house** – the need for flexible spaces and storage was highlighted
- **Foyer** – the importance of layout, spacing and seating to cater for different patrons and performances was highlighted
- **Accessibility** – access for people with mobility issues, from the car park and pathways through to theatre and studio seating
- **Storage** – needed for walkers, prams
- **Rehearsal spaces** – need space for dressing/changing and storage, parent and student waiting and staff areas, flexible spaces
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- **Car parking** – consideration of lighting, security, access to centre, number of spaces
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- **Studio Theatre** – type of floor, accessibility of seating, performance area and wings, were areas of importance
- **Catering** – availability for pre-performance and functions
- **Emergency exits** – needs to be enough exits in case of emergency
- **Funding** – queries about who should fund the project
- **Fountain** – disappointment at demolition of the fountain

Discussion Summaries

This section summarises the feedback provided by stakeholders and the wider community on the Schematic Design across all mediums – video conference, feedback forms, emails and online submissions via the Your Say portal.

Many of the questions and matters raised by participants in the video conference sessions reflect topics they sought to further understand or clarify, and of importance to them. Questions and matters raised were responded to at the time by a representative of Council's Project Working Group, an architect or relevant specialist in attendance.

Key Clients

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

Back of house

- A participant enquired about storage spaces and fitout details, noting that there are fixed and non-fixed elements.

Dressing rooms

- Participants pointed out that sometimes they have very large cast numbers for performances (e.g. Whitehorse Showtime has >150 people), so it would be good if they could have access to flexible dressing room and studio spaces if needed.

Foyer

- A participant asked for the bar dimensions, noting that it would be preferable for the bar area to be larger than the old centre to allow for full house events.

Impressions

- Several participants expressed their satisfaction with the overall design, with some saying it is "fantastic".

Loading dock

- A participant enquired about the loading dock dimensions and highlighted the need for easy access via foot to the stage door, as often large costumes are carried in.

Performing arts centre

- A participant congratulated the team on the Schematic Design, noting that the building has strength but is softened by the curves. It was thought that the entrance

will provide a much better “sense of occasion” than the former building. It has an elegance and composure.

- A participant noted that the interior shows great attention to detail. They expressed that it will be exciting when all spaces are functioning simultaneously as it will provide many opportunities for meeting new friends of similar interests.

Precinct

- A participant noted that the precinct is enhanced by the design but as it is currently depicted, it could feel hot in a dry summer. More shade and greenery would improve the experience for theatre goers. They asked if there are plans for a water feature.

Proscenium theatre

Seating

- A written submission expressed concerns about the proposed seating arrangement. It stated that breaking up the seating with aisles means the best seats in the house are lost, and that continental seating is the best option for a 600-seat theatre and it brings the audience closer to the stage. The Besen theatre plan was provided as a good example. This submission also stated that removing seats for disabled seating was unnecessary and that having disabled seating at the rear and sides on a platform would create some of the best seats in the theatre.
- Participants enquired about the seating capacity, the rake of the theatre and the new seating layout, which has a mix of continental and centre aisle seating.
- Another participant appreciated the choice of seating available for patrons.
- A participant enquired about sightlines from the widest rows and also from the front rows, noting that sightlines can be poor from the front seats, especially for children.
- A participant enquired about seat availability for wheelchair and carer access and use.
- A participant highlighted the need to have space for walker storage.

Stage door access

- Some participants enquired about the door widths of the stage door and dressing rooms, advising that these need to be wide enough to cater for productions where cast wear big costumes and to allow quick and clear access between the stage to the dressing rooms.

Theatrical lighting

- A participant highlighted that the need for a catwalk/bridge for follow spotlights was raised at Concept Design engagement and as it was noted this was incorporated in the design.

Rehearsal rooms – Utassy Ballet School

Changing spaces

Participants expressed concern about the number of rehearsal dressing/changing rooms. They need space for numbers of children and to accommodate gender.

Size of rooms

- Participants noted that the room size of 14 x 9m is above minimum 10 x 10m required for RAD approved testing. They pointed out that schools are looking for good sized spaces for dance and drama. They asked if the wall between the rehearsal rooms can be opened.

Staff space

- Participants asked if there was somewhere for ballet teacher to go between classes, for example, could they use a storage area or the Green Room?

Storage

- Participants enquired about storage space, as space is needed for students bags (students come straight from school with school bags, need to have somewhere to put them). They suggested a storage room or pigeon holes in the corridor could work.

Waiting spaces – Utassy Ballet School

- Participants pointed out that students and parents waiting for class and/or pick up need somewhere to wait.

Precinct Stakeholders

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

Car Parking

Access and cost

- One participant asked if there will be boom gates to the open double-storey car park and will there be a fee to use it.

Lighting

- One participant enquired about any potential changes to lighting in the western car park, raising a concern about the impact on nearby residents and on wildlife.

- One participant asked if the solar lighting would be kept.

Number of spaces

- A participant asked about the number of extra car spaces that would be available when the project is completed. This participant was concerned about the adequacy of car parking, noting that since COVID-19 lockdown there seem to be many more PSOs parking in the area.

Overflow car park

- A participant asked about the expected use of the overflow car park.

Walker Park - access to parking

- A participant representing Nunawading Gym in Walker Park noted that their patrons and committee were concerned about the impact on parking for members during construction. They asked if the Walker Park car park could be monitored to ensure enough parking for the gymnastics club and other sports clubs during this time.

Farmers Market

- A participant asked where the Farmers Market will be located during development.

Funding

- A participant asked how Council is going to fund this “expensive undertaking” and if rates would rise as part of the funding.

Impressions

One participant noted that “I live 100m from the venue and I think it looks lovely”.

Performing Arts Centre

- One participant asked if the footprint of the performing arts centre had changed since the Concept Design as it seems closer to housing.

Current and Potential Future Clients

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

Car Parking

- A participant asked if there will be more car spaces than currently provided.
- Two participants raised concerns about car park safety. While they thought the concrete wall looks good, they were concerned that the wall would conceal the car park and make it less safe, thereby requiring extra lighting and safety measures.
- A participant asked if the upper level of the car park would have a ramp for pedestrian access.

Cinema

- A participant asked if the performing arts centre would have facilities for cinema.

Entrance

- A participant felt that the main entrance to the centre lacks a point of focus and practicality, and could be enhanced by a portico providing focus and, importantly, protection from inclement weather.

Foyer

- One participant suggested that thought be given to providing French doors (or similar) to the south-east facing glass wall to allow audience members to flow outside during interval, and also allow easier access for large numbers to exit at the conclusion of an event.

Function Rooms

- A participant asked if the function rooms open up for large events, for example 80-100 people seated theatre style.
- A participant asked if the function areas have AV and catering, and if hirers are required to use in-house caterers or can they arrange their own catering.
- A participant asked how much it will cost to hire the function spaces.

Impressions

- One participant congratulated the team, saying that the new centre is very high quality and very exciting.

Precinct

- One participant suggested to have as many trees (mature) as possible when redesigning the car park as the existing trees have taken up to 30 years to grow to their current maturity and their loss would be detrimental in many ways.

Proscenium Theatre

- A participant asked about seating capacity and if it would be possible to hire out half of the proscenium theatre.

Rehearsal Spaces

- A participant asked if there will be an EOI process to book the rehearsal spaces on a permanent basis.

Studio

- A participant asked if the studio will have a sprung floor.
- A participant asked if it is possible to load into the studio from the soundshell or does loading have to come via the main loading dock.
- A participant asked about the width of the wing area in the studio.
- A participant asked if there would be automated lighting in the studio.
- Two participants noted the sprung floor requirement for the Studio Theatre to be practical for dance or gymnastic groups.
- A participant commented that the 200-seat studio theatre is not suitable for group productions as it doesn't have wings for entering and exiting the stage.

Sustainability

- A participant asked if there had been consideration of using solar panels on the roof of the performing arts centre.

Users

- One participant commented that small production groups, which have been regular users of the Whitehorse Centre over many years, are not catered for, suggesting that it will be uneconomical for them to hire the large theatre unless some discount is offered to these groups.

Patrons

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

Capacity

- A participant asked if the main theatre and the studio would be in use at the same time, highlighting the need to consider staggering performance times to avoid crowding in foyer, toilets etc.

Catering

- A participant enquired about the availability of light refreshments for pre-performance food and drink, pointing out that it would be good to have some food available as there are no nearby cafes or restaurants.

Impressions

- Participants' comments included:
 - *I love the blend between inside and outside.*
 - *Love the idea of nature and plantings outside.*
 - *Good spacing between seats.*
 - *Love the larger foyer.*
 - *It all looks fantastic.*
 - *Looking forward to using the new centre when finished.*
- A participant was grateful for the project updates and noted that they are particularly delighted with the lines and indoor/outdoor links. The participant believes that the design seems to incorporate the needs of patrons and other parts of the community very well.
- A written submission noted that the streamlined, sound design presents an ideal functional facility.
- One participant felt that there was no "wow" factor but expected this would come later in the design stage.

Proscenium Theatre

Seating

- A participant asked if there could be a centre aisle in the front bank of seats as some people prefer to sit close to the stage.
- A participant asked about the spacing between the rows and if the seating is offset to enhance access and sightlines.
- A participant who books blocks of seats for up to 40 people asked which would be the best seats for access and sightlines.

- A participant enquired about the choice of colour for the upholstery, wondering if the raspberry colour was chosen because it makes patrons feel more comfortable. The participant added that they like the colour selected as it is “luxurious”, but relaxing.
- A participant expressed hope that the seating will turn out well as this has been a query from all ages of patrons, comparing the relative comfort of the old seating to that at the Murdoch Centre.

Emergency exits

- Two participants raised concerns about the number of entrances/exits to the theatre, with one asking what would happen in an emergency given that there are only two exits from the theatre.
- One participant was concerned that in the event of an emergency, there seemed to be only “easy” exit through the front area, with no reasonably-sized alternative exits. If the front area was compromised, how would people from the theatres and from the function areas exit?

Shelter

- One participant suggested that thought be given to extending roofing outside to provide a cover from rain.
- One participant raised a concern about lack of shading in the outdoor area.

Studio

- A participant asked about seating capacity in the studio and flexible use of the space.

General Community

The following summarises the key themes/topics raised by community members via Your Say portal and emails. The topics are presented in alphabetical order.

Accessibility

- A community member asked that Design for Dignity principles be adopted for people with disabilities and accessibility requirements.
- A community member suggested that to be completely community-inclusive, the centre should be financially accessible to all schools.
- A community member asked if there will be provision for audio description services for vision impaired patrons.

Amphitheatre

- A community member asked if the amphitheatre facing west would be a problem for entertainers, for example, when the sun is low, and when the sun beats down from the west during summer, as there is no shade in the open space in front of the stage.

Hoarding

- A community member described the fencing on the north side as an “eyesore” and noted that the solid black fencing on the south side presents a “nicer” view to the council building than the open fencing on the south side which is seen by residents. This person queried if the view from the council building is more important than the view to the local residents, who are living through it (especially during lockdown).

Impressions

- Several community members noted that they are impressed with the design of the centre, highlighting features such as the extra space, the look and the balance of priorities.
- One community member felt the open double-storey car park is a fantastic idea.
- One community member was pleased that the leadlight glass window is being retained.
- One community member expressed the view that the design of the building and car park and precinct was bland and ugly.

Lighting

- Two community members enquired about the outside lighting plan for night events, general evening activities, security and pathway lighting to assist access by older people.

Parking

- A community member felt that the open double-storey car park was disappointing and fails to promote active transport, like bicycles and public transport.
- A community member expressed concerns about car parking, noting that easy access to the centre for people with mobility issues is important, and asked about the number of spaces available to patrons and for disabled parking.
- A community member asked if car parking will be free and guaranteed into the future.
- A community member raised a number of matters, including the possibility to decorate the bollards between the carpark and the building, for example, with mosaic that reflects the leadlight windows, or replace them with planter boxes or a picking garden of herbs or similar for park users. This person also raised concerns about the sightlines in the open double-storey car park and the impact on safety/security, noting that the solid wall means that anyone returning to their car can't see if anyone else is in the car park until they reach the top of the stairs.
- A community member commented that there should be more spaces for undercover e-bike, bike and motorbike parking.

Performing Arts Centre

Design

- A community member expressed that they find the entrance area small and claustrophobic, while the space opening to the meeting area is wonderful.
- A community member suggested that murals on the external walls of the building would reflect the diverse cultural mix of the municipality.
- A community member expressed the view that the design is unattractive and does not give a good first impression, and that the internal colour needs to be reconsidered.
- A community member suggested considering wood for the construction of the centre as the high amount of brick work will heat the centre and also attract graffiti.
- A community member suggested that there should be a grassy area, or landscaped play area, with shading immediately in front of the entrance to provide a space for parents and children before performances.
- A community member expressed the view that the design would become outdated.

Foyer

- Two community members noted that the design did not appear to include seating in the foyer and this is very important.

Name

- One community member suggested that keeping "Whitehorse Centre" as the name of the performing arts centre is a better reflection and more inclusive of the multipurpose use of the building and the history of the site.

Seating

- One community member noted that while the Schematic Design pictures look impressive, they appear to focus on young healthy people, while many patrons will be older and some will be wheelchair bound. This person noted that the old centre provided great seats for wheelchair bound patrons. This person also hoped that the seats would not allow only for slim people (like the Karalyka Theatre).
- A community member expressed the hope that seating arrangements in the theatres will be audience friendly with space for people to move past and more aisles for easier access.

Solar

- One community member hoped that the centre would be solar powered, noting the potential roof space.

Spaces

- One community member suggested that there should be a specific area for an art gallery so that exhibitions can be held. This person queried the amount of space for operations and office, noting that this is much more than in the old centre.
- One community member was pleased with the inclusion of a parenting room, noting that it should be easy to access from the auditorium.

Theatres

- A representative of the Maroondah Singers asked if both performance venues will be acoustically suited to choral group performances, noting that in the old theatre sound was lost in the vertical space above the stage.
- One community member suggested that a bigger theatre would be needed for school concerts and that it would be preferable to have one larger theatre and two smaller theatres.

Precinct

- One community member noted that the precinct will allow for more activities than are currently available.
- Several community members expressed their disappointment at the fountain being demolished, noting that it was much loved by children and families, was eye-catching and was a unique feature of the landscape which added amenity for daily users of the precinct.
- One community member suggested that a water feature would attract locals, provide a sanctuary and enhance liveability.

- A community member hoped that as many mature trees as possible can be salvaged, noting that it would be disastrous to see the nice leafy environment destroyed.
- A community member noted that it was great to see green space being retained and enhanced. This person lives nearby and noted that they enjoy the open feel of the park and like the tree planting (relocation) that's recently been done at the northern end.

Process

- One community member questioned the consultation process, hoping that this survey is “not a token tick a box consultation”.
- One community member noted that while they loved the images created for the Schematic Design, they questioned if they are necessary given the time and costs involved.
- One community member asked why this project wasn't “front and centre” at local council elections.
- One community member asked if the project is going to meet the original timeline.
- One community member noted that feedback had already been given and queried what happened to that feedback.

Project

- Five community members expressed a preference to not proceed with the project, highlighting issues such as cost to ratepayers, not needed as there are many auditoriums in Melbourne, preference for a large park, a misuse of resources, uncertainty about post-COVID need and impact of future restrictions.
- One community member suggested that the project should be funded with contributions from government and parties who are interested in using the centre, not just ratepayers.

Sheds

- One community member asked if more sheds were to be built where the old sheds were, noting that it would be preferable to incorporate storage space below the new building.

Special Interest Groups

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

Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee

On 16 September 2020, a meeting was held via video conference with committee members, Council's Project Team and architect representatives. The discussion is summarised below by topic/theme.

Acoustics

- A participant asked about the expected sound quality for different types of performance, including orchestra.

Impressions

- Participants' comments included:
 - *Looks amazing.*
 - *Design seems more intuitive than old centre – able to navigate organically.*
 - *Natural lighting and surroundings create a refreshing atmosphere.*
 - *Warm natural finishes look good.*

Proscenium theatre

- A participant asked about flexibility for different numbers of performers.

Soundproofing

- A participant asked if soundproofing is optimal to allow for rehearsal spaces and theatres to be used at the same time with minimal noise bleeding.

Sustainability

A participant asked about the environmental attributes of the design, noting a preference for environmentally-sustainable design elements to be considered.

Toilets

A participant noted that at Concept Design consultation, feedback was given on the need for gender neutral toilets and enquired how the design responds to that.

Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee

On 21 September 2020, a meeting was held via video conference with committee members, Council's Project Team and design team representatives. The discussion is summarised below by topic/theme.

Amphitheatre

- A participant highlighted the need for accessible and clearly signed paths to the grassed areas, noting that the topography is a bit tricky, especially if you are in a wheelchair.
- A participant noted that pathways can get congested and there are currently some curbing issues. Need wayfinding to designated seating areas and also throughout the precinct.
- A participant asked about access to the stage for people with a disability, as they may be participants, not just spectators.

Car park

- A participant asked if the only access to the upper level of the car park is via the road, noting that the ramp is very long and means people with mobility issues must travel a long way to access the performing arts centre. The participant commented that it would be great if there was a lift in the car park.
- A participant noted that if they arrive too late, the accessible car spaces will be full and they will have to park elsewhere.
- One participant raised a suggestion regarding operation of the car parking: perhaps people with mobility issues could call ahead to reserve a car space at grade. These spaces could then be held for people.

Impressions

- One participant said they can't wait for the centre to be completed and it will be a great asset for the community.

Proscenium theatre

- A participant asked about access to the upper and lower seating, noting that when you arrive at the proscenium theatre you enter at grade but then need to step up or down. The participant suggested that gently sloping ramps instead of stairs would be better for people with sight and mobility issues.

Studio

- A participant asked if there is only accessible seating at the bottom of the retractable seats.

Traffic

- A participant asked if there is a plan to manage the traffic especially when people are arriving for a performance, and if buses and cars will be stopped to let pedestrians access the performing arts centre.

Appendices

Appendix I: List of Participants

The following is a list of groups who participated in the engagement program, whether via video conference or 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"> • Academy of Dance Victoria • All Saints Anglican church • Alternative Facts • Asian Business Association of Whitehorse • Box Hill Ballet Association • Combined Rotary Clubs of Whitehorse • Communities Council on Ethnic Issues (Eastern Region) Inc • CWA Victoria • Federation of Victoria Film Societies • Hong Kong Club Inc Victoria • Inclusive Music Theatre Inc • Peranakan Association Australia Inc
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"> • Mitcham Football & Cricket Clubs • Nunawading Gymnastics & Sports Club • Neighbouring residents
Special Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitehorse Youth Representative Committee • Whitehorse Disability Advisory Committee
General Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents and other members of the wider Whitehorse community

Appendix II: Feedback Forms

Stakeholder Feedback Form

Please provide your comments on the Schematic Design for the Whitehorse Centre redevelopment. To adhere to Council's Election Period Policy, feedback can only be received following the Caretaker Period. Please submit your comments by 26 October 2020 via:

email: whitehorsecentre.redevelopment@whitehorse.vic.gov.au or

post: Whitehorse City Council, 379-397 Whitehorse Road, Nunawading VIC 3131

Performing Arts Centre

Precinct

Other

Online Feedback Form

Please provide your comments on the Schematic Design for the Whitehorse Centre redevelopment.

Performing Arts Centre

Precinct

Other
