



**Community Consultation**

# **Meredith Park Management**





**Council is seeking community views on Meredith Park before it decides on one of two future management options.**

Meredith Park, a six-hectare reserve on the northern edge of Lake Colac (about 12km from Colac township), is currently used for free overnight camping and public open space. Council is delegated by the State Government to manage the reserve on its behalf. The reserve has been used and managed as a free campground for decades.

In response to a significant increase in use and concerns about risks at the reserve, Council has been investigating various management options and has resolved that there are two viable ongoing options:

**Option1. Status Quo (with upgrades)** – continue to allow overnight camping with management changes that better enable the social and environmental benefits while also reducing risks.

**Option 2. Day use public open space** – a more passive day use park with overnight camping not permitted.

In addition to the two primary options under consideration—continued camping with upgrades (Option 1) and conversion to a day-use area (Option 2)—Council acknowledges the potential for a hybrid model that combines elements of both.

This Community Information Paper has been developed to support gathering opinions, ideas, and concerns about Meredith Park from the community before Council makes its decision on either Option 1 or Option 2.

Council is seeking to understand the full range of community views, including support for continued camping, preferences for day-use only, or hybrid models

Your input will play an important role in shaping Council's final decision

## Current situation - benefits

The park offers numerous social and environmental benefits:

### Free Campsites

The park provides free campsites equipped with fireplaces, access to potable water, and serviced toilet facilities. Users can book a camp site via Council's website

### Scenic Environment

The site is beautifully treed, offering a peaceful and expansive view directly over the lake.

Community Consultation - Meredith Park Management

### Habitat for Endangered Species

The foreshore serves as a habitat for the endangered Corangamite Water Skink (lizard).

### Natural Amenity

Campers appreciate the natural beauty, tranquility, and remoteness of the site, which are key aspects of its appeal.

## Current situation - issues/risks

In addition to the multiple benefits of the park, there are several environmental, public safety issues/risks that need to be considered. Current issues include:

### Infrastructure Quality

Some infrastructure, including signage, roads, fences, gates, paths, is of low standard and in need of repair.

### Toilets and Waste Systems

Generally, toilets and waste systems work well but can get overloaded during peak times.

### Maintenance and Administration Costs

Council incurs ongoing costs for maintenance and infrastructure improvements, monitoring and regulation (i.e. daily or alternate day site visits), and administration (i.e. permit system, complaint response, customer service etc).

### Habitat Impact

Impacts on habitat of the endangered Corangamite Water Skink.

### Campfire Risks

During the fire danger period, particularly non-compliance on days of Total Fire Ban.

### Anti-social and Dangerous Behaviours

Although not common, anti-social and sometimes dangerous behaviours have been observed and reported at the park. These incidents are often linked to excessive alcohol consumption. The park's remote and largely unsupervised nature contributes to these issues

### Tree Safety

Tree safety is a concern within the park.

### Wind Impact

Exceptionally strong winds can impact the site, especially winds from the west that come directly off the lake.

### Lack of Masterplan and Management Plan

There is no masterplan or management plan to guide and coordinate infrastructure, expected behaviours and resources required at the reserve.

## Costs and Economic Impacts

Council's annual operating cost to manage the reserve, which varies from year to year depending on usage and other factors, is estimated at approximately (\$140k). This can be broken down as:

Land maintenance (eg grass mowing, tree trimming, tree safety monitoring, fencing, road maintenance, fire pit repairs)	<b>\$15k</b>
Waste management (bin maintenance, collection, waste disposal, litter collection)	<b>\$20k</b>
Toilets (cleaning, building repairs, wastewater pumping)	<b>\$40k</b>
Ranger services (local laws compliance inspections and complaint responses and investigations)	<b>\$30k</b>
Asset renewal and replacement (eg picnic tables, fencing, fire pits, signs)	<b>\$20k</b>
Planning and administration (officer time for budgeting, permit management, various planning processes, investigations and reports)	<b>\$15k</b>
<b>ANNUAL TOTAL ESTIMATES</b>	<b>\$140k</b>

## Revenue and Economic Impact

Currently, Council does not charge a camping fee at Meredith Park. However, under Option 1, introducing a modest fee may be considered.

While the broader economic impact is difficult to quantify, campers likely provide direct benefits to some local businesses.

Conversely, Meredith Park may pose a minor economic disadvantage to nearby commercial camping providers, with three registered caravan parks in close proximity.

If camping were discontinued, it is uncertain whether visitors would choose alternative sites within the Shire or go elsewhere.

## Operational and Infrastructure Costs

Regardless of the chosen option, Council will need to develop a masterplan and management plan for the reserve.

Option 1 is expected to incur higher overall costs due to increased infrastructure and operational demands.

In contrast, Option 2 would likely reduce annual costs, as lower visitor numbers would result in less waste, fewer behavioural issues, and reduced ranger interventions.

Operating costs for Option 2 could be approximately half those of Option 1.

Infrastructure costs for both options are expected to be modest, especially under Option 1, where existing facilities may suffice with minimal upgrades.

## Summary of Options - Strengths and Weaknesses

ISSUES	OPTION 1 Status Quo	OPTION 2 Day Visitor Area
Benefit of free camping	Yes	No
Benefit of fireplaces, potable water, serviced toilets	Yes	Yes, however firepits may not be required
Fishing, boating and other outdoor recreation benefits	Yes	Yes
Treed, peaceful and expansive outlook directly over the lake natural amenity, quietness, and feeling of relative remoteness	Yes	Yes
Poor user behaviour	Yes at times, likely to be a greater issue than Option 2	Yes at times, likely to be less of an issue than Option 1
Corangamite Water Skink habitat protection	Yes	Yes
Potential other environmental habitat enhancements (e.g. native vegetation protections and enhancement)	Yes, possible	Yes, possible

## Have Your Say

**Council would like to know your thoughts on the future management of Meredith Park.**

**Scan the QR Code to complete the Community Consultation Survey or visit our website:**

**[www.colacotway.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay](http://www.colacotway.vic.gov.au/haveyoursay)**



Community Consultation - Meredith Park Management