

Consultation results:

Coastal and Marine Management Plan

Stage 1 Consultation

The development of a Coastal and Marine Management Plan for the Borough of Queenscliffe will allow Council to strategically manage coastal developments over the long-term. Council has prioritised developing this plan in line with the local community, and held an initial stage of consultation that concluded on 31 January 2021 as part of a program of community engagement.

This initial stage of consultation was focused on gaining an understanding of what our community values about our coasts, and how they think they should be managed into the future. Opportunities for comment were available for our coastal landscapes as a whole as well as individual areas of coastline.

Council received 270 responses and 5 submissions during this first stage of engagement. A number of participants also took part in an online presentation and Q&A with Council officers. Council wants to thank all participants for sharing their ideas with us.

The contents of this report will be used as a primary input for Council officers to develop a draft Coastal and Marine Management Plan. Other inputs will involve direct consultation with the Wadawurrung and coastal leaseholders.

Results summary

Consultation participants reported visiting the Borough's coasts for a wide range of reasons, but the most popular were gentle exercise, visiting natural spaces and socialising with others. Only one use differed significantly between age groups, with users under the age of 50 more highly prioritising coastal areas as exercise spaces and suggesting improvements in this area.

The natural features of the Borough's coasts were a popular favourite feature, and preserving natural spaces through erosion prevention and general maintenance were commonly suggested improvements to coastal management practices. Respondents on average wanted to see an increase in walking and running trails, seated areas and protected vegetation.

Most respondents identified different preferred uses for different coastal areas, and these priorities typically matched existing management behaviours. This indicates respondents largely felt different coastal areas were serving appropriate functions, and should continue to be managed accordingly.

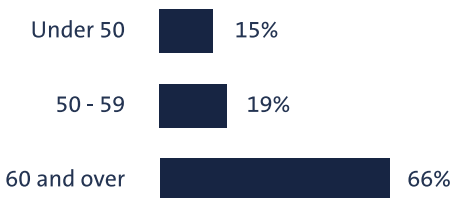


Demographic results

Council received 270 responses to its online survey and 5 submissions – a high number considering the small population of the Borough. Consultation responses were also tracked across two demographic metrics – the age of respondents, and whether respondents resided in the Borough full-time, part-time, or as a visitor. These demographic checks allowed us to understand how different user groups responded to the questions asked.

Responses by age

Respondents aged over 60 were over-represented in the survey, forming two-thirds of responses but only about half of the Borough’s population. While this means the results of this consultation are from an older sample than the Borough overall, response variance across ages was limited, and the large volume of responses meant general trends within age groups could be observed where they appeared.



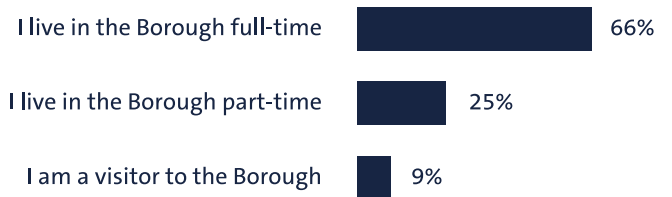
Response variation by age

Throughout most of the survey, response averages did not vary significantly by age. The only notable variation by age included:

- Respondents under the age of 50 tended to prioritise coastal landscapes as exercise spaces more than older residents. The majority of these respondents also felt Council should invest in more exercise opportunities on our coasts, compared to older residents who tended to feel this need was already met.

Responses by residency

Full-time residents represented a majority of responses. Each response group in this case was also large enough in absolute terms to gain a general understanding of whether residency impacted how respondents felt about coastal management priorities.



Response variation by residency

Few notable differences emerged between respondents who lived in the Borough full-time, part-time or only as a visitor, except for one:

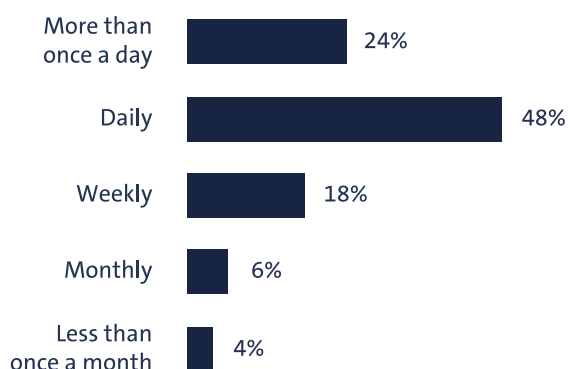
- Respondents who identified themselves as visitors to the Borough more frequently reported visiting coasts and local businesses at the same time, including using coastal areas to access local shops or as part of their shopping experience. This is an unsurprising finding, but demonstrates the continued visitor appeal and subsequent economic benefit of the Borough’s coastal spaces.

General views and values

Participants were asked how they used and valued the Borough’s coastal spaces overall. Respondents were asked closed and open-ended questions to gain a detailed understanding of the features and experiences that are most important to our community.

How often to you visit the Borough’s coasts?

Respondents reported visiting coastal spaces very frequently, with more than 70% reporting visiting daily or more frequently. Unsurprisingly, visit frequency was slightly higher among full-time residents, with <1% of these respondents reporting visiting the coasts monthly or less than monthly.



What are the top three reasons why you visit the Borough’s coasts? (Choose up to three)

While participants reported visiting coastal areas for a range of reasons, walking and spending time in nature were the most popular. It should be noted that a large number of open-ended responses under *Some other reason (please specify)* were also exercise activities, such as swimming. Considered together with the other exercise responses, exercise was the most common use of coastal spaces, with participants reporting walking, running, swimming, surfing and riding among the many activities they visit our coasts for. This use case was even more pronounced for respondents under the age of 50.



What's the best thing about the Borough's coasts as they currently are?

Participants were asked about their favourite feature of the Borough's coastal environments. While this was an open-ended question, many participants responded along similar themes. Some of the most popular responses included:

- **The natural spaces (19% of all responses)**
- **The quality of beaches (14%)**
- **The natural beauty of coastal areas (13%)**
- **East of access (11%)**
- **Cleanliness (10%)**

Other common responses were the lack of development, variety of different coastal spaces, and walking trails.

Sample responses from participants include:

"Accessible to a diverse range of users."

"The natural beauty in the context of so much built infrastructure."

"Relatively natural and not built up."

"The year round off-lead dog beach."

"Point Lonsdale beach area is beautifully set up, parking and picnic facilities."

"Walking paths and the variety."

"Recreation for a wide variety of people and activities."

"The beaches and water are clean and a joy to use both on land and water."

What's the worst thing about the Borough's coasts as they currently are?

Participants were also asked about what could be improved. As with the previous question, respondents gave a variety of responses, but common themes emerged, including:

- **Erosion (20%)**
- **Weeds and pests (12%)**
- **Rubbish and uncleanliness (8%)**
- **General maintenance (8%)**
- **Off-lead dogs (7%)**

Other common responses included overcrowding during busy periods and a sense of over-development in parts of the Borough.

Sample responses from participants:

"Insufficient maintenance of weeds."

"Rubbish and impacted soil threatening habitat of native orchids."

"Dog droppings and dogs off their leash."

"The dramatic erosion of the sand-dunes."

"Lack of maintenance."

"Weeds and rubbish along foreshore."

"Heavy erosion due to increasing wild weather."

"Inadequate number of beachside bins."

If you could add one new thing to the Borough's coasts to make them better, what would it be?

We also asked participants to share an idea for how we could make our coasts even better. We received a wide variety of responses, but some of the most popular included:

- **More or better walking trails (11%)**
- **Improved toilets and showers (8%)**
- **More protection for vegetation (7%)**
- **More weeding activity (5%)**
- **More bins and litter cleanup (5%)**

Protecting dunes (including from erosion) was also popular, as well as improvements for cyclists and riders.

Sample responses from participants:

"Build up inside wall on boardwalk to protect the sand dunes headland in high seas."

"Improved walking trail Ferry to Fellows Road."

"Simpler dog bylaws - on lead at all times."

"Increased maintenance of bush and weed removal."

"More good quality clean accessible public toilets."

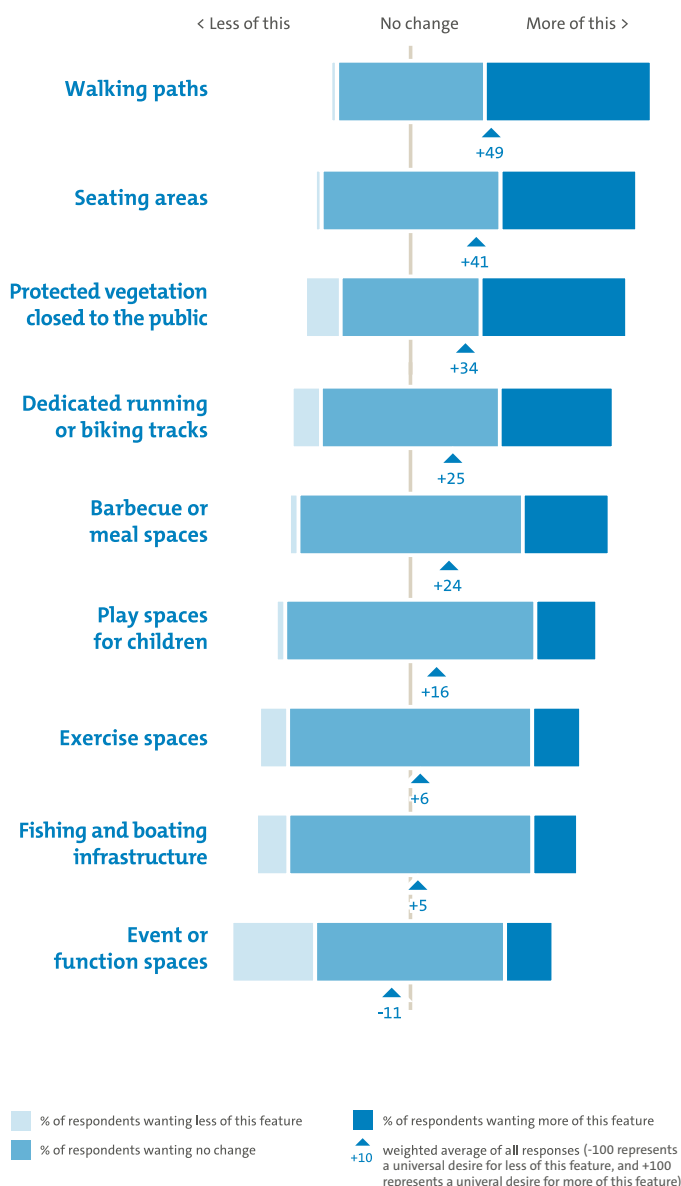
"More protected areas for wildlife."

"Better structures to save beach sand from erosion."

Thinking about how our coasts might look in ten years, which of these features would you like to see more or less of?

Participants were asked whether our coasts should have more, the same, or less of the following features ten years from now. This graph lists the weighted average of whether respondents felt coasts should have more, less or the same amount of these features.

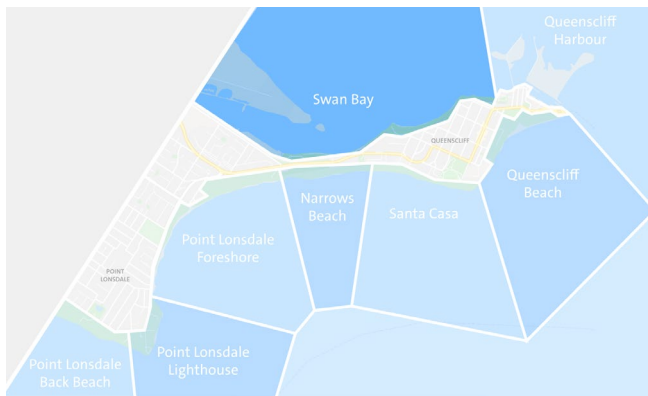
On average, participants wanted increases in most facilities, particularly walking paths, seating areas and protected vegetation.



Priorities by area

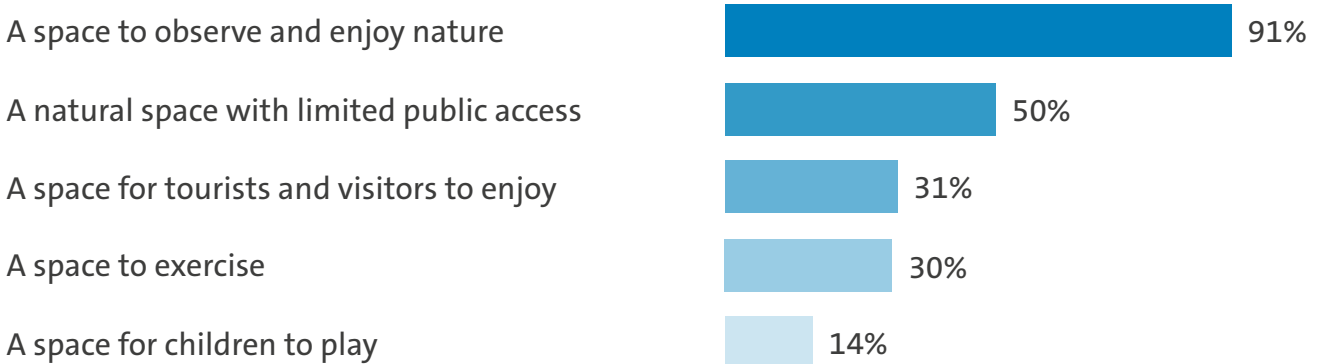
An effective Coastal and Marine Management Plan should be dynamic – responding not only to the features of coastal landscapes as a whole, but setting objectives and principles for the management of different landscapes. This is particularly important in the Borough, which has a variety of different coastal spaces that are used in different ways.

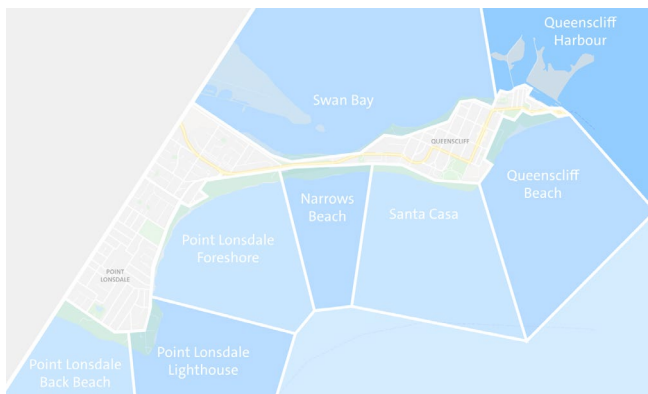
To meet this need, consultation participants were asked to identify **what kind of spaces different areas of coastline should be ten years from now**. Participants were able to choose up to three uses from a list, or submit their own ideas as an open-ended response. The below and following pages detail how participants responded to this question for eight different areas of coastline around the Borough.



Swan Bay

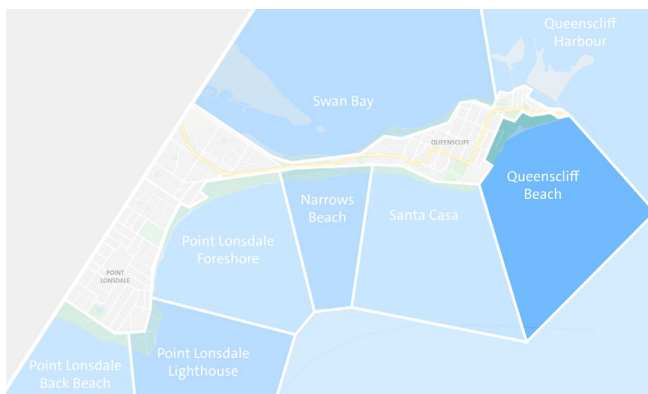
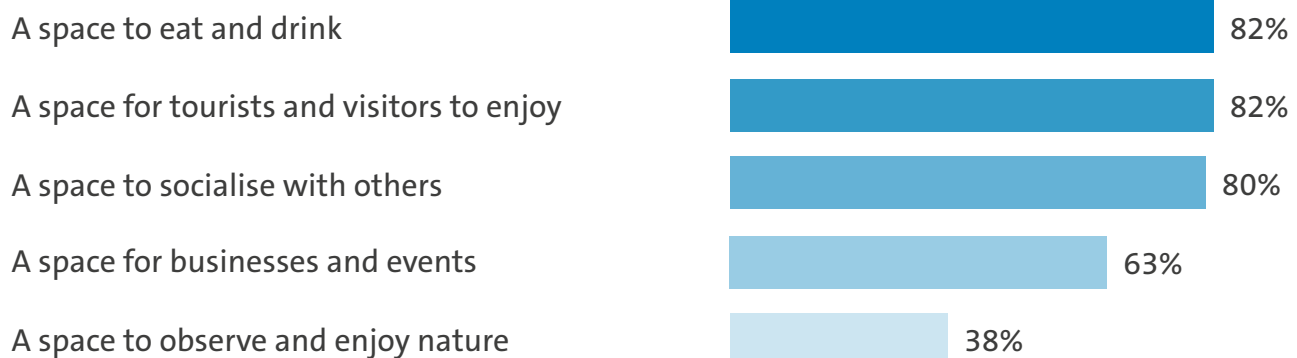
Participants felt Swan Bay should primarily be a natural space, with more than 90% of respondents selecting “a space to observe and enjoy nature” as one of the space’s three most important functions. Respondents also suggested public access to natural spaces in this area should be more limited than in any of the Borough’s other coastal landscapes.





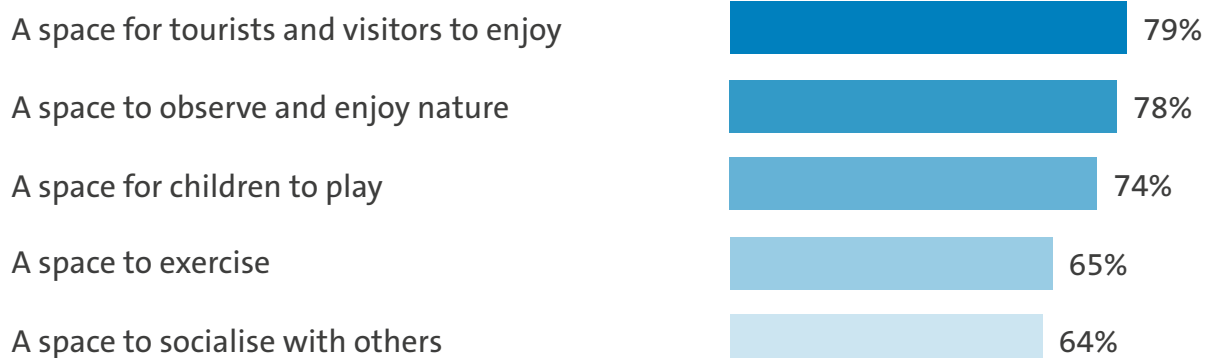
Queenscliff Harbour

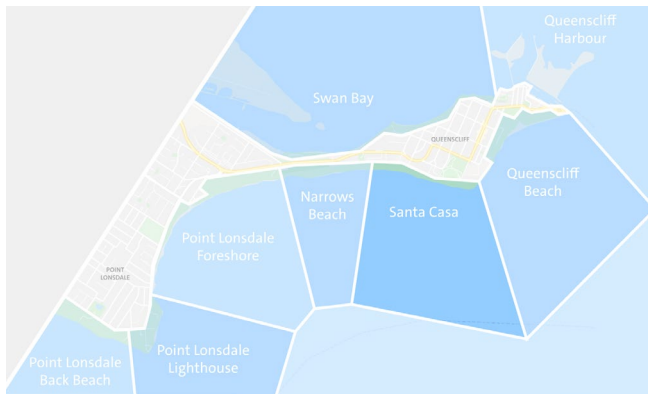
Participants felt Queenscliff Harbour was primarily a space to eat and drink, entertain visitors, and socialise, rounding out the three most popular responses. Support for businesses and events in this location was also high.



Queenscliff Beach

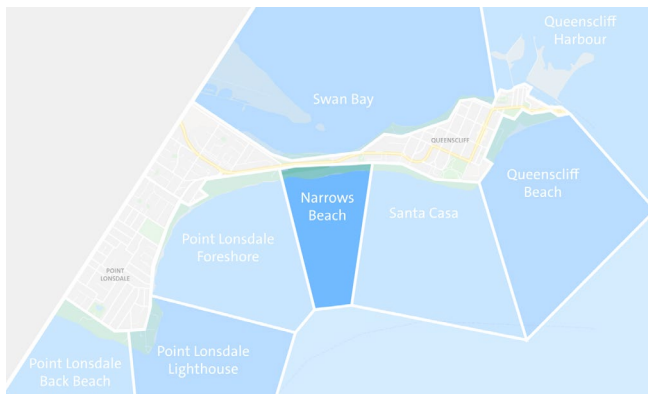
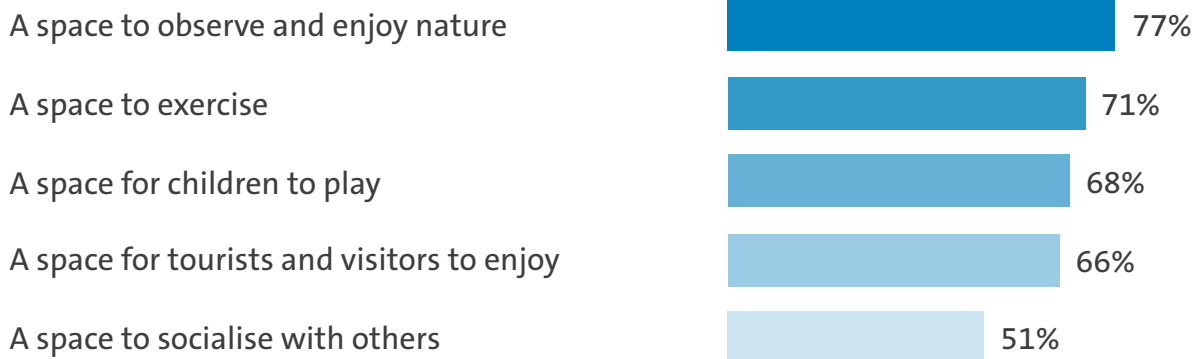
Participants felt Queenscliff Beach should remain a primary destination for visiting and gatherings, including for children. Participants tended to want this area to remain a space to observe and enjoy nature, in contrast to the built-up harbour nearby.





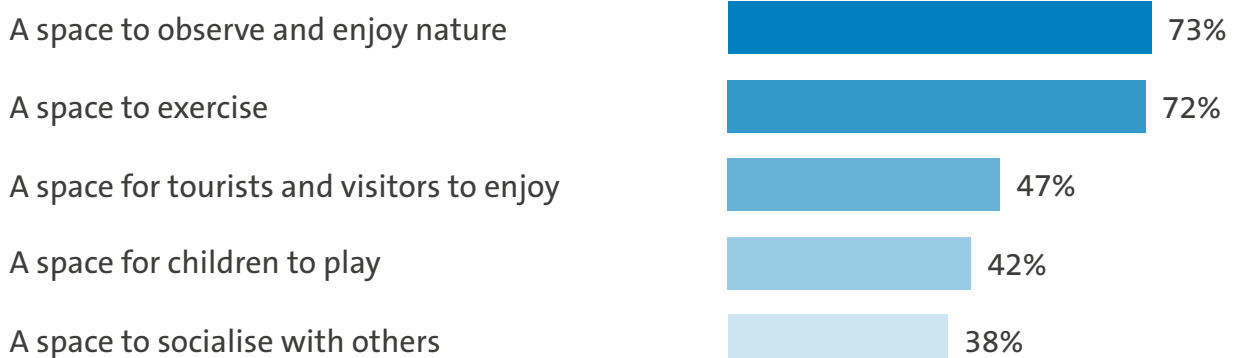
Santa Casa

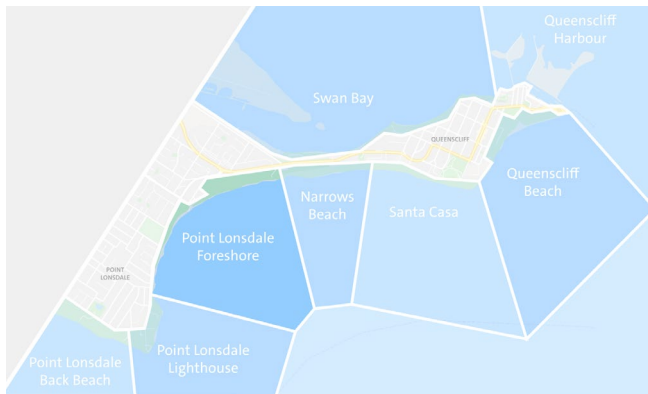
Participants tended to appreciate the more relaxed feel of the Santa Casa coastline, listing its natural appeal as an important feature of the space, while also seeing recreational values for residents and visitors.



Narrows Beach

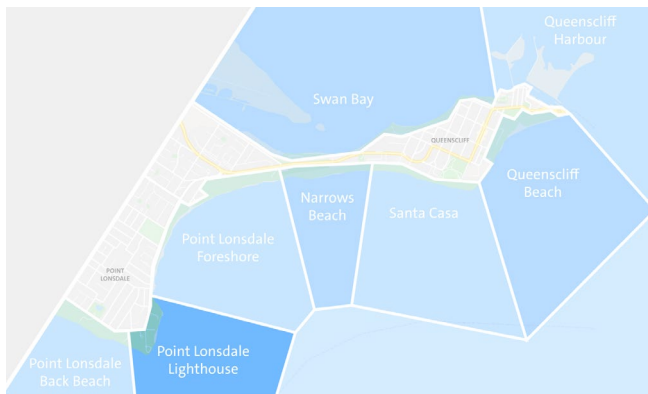
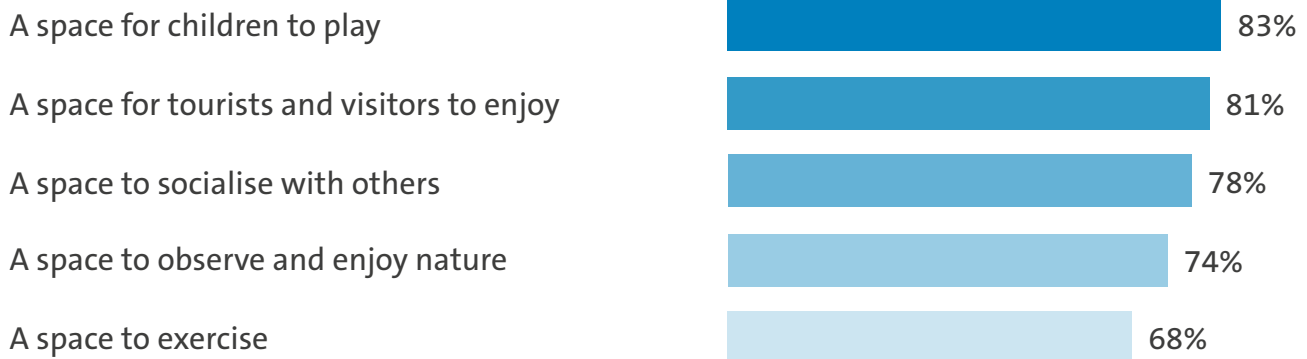
Narrows Beach rated similarly to Santa Casa, as a recreational space with natural features. Falling just outside the top five responses were open-ended comments on the importance of this beach as a space to exercise dogs – an important feature of this area for many visitors and particularly to dog owners.





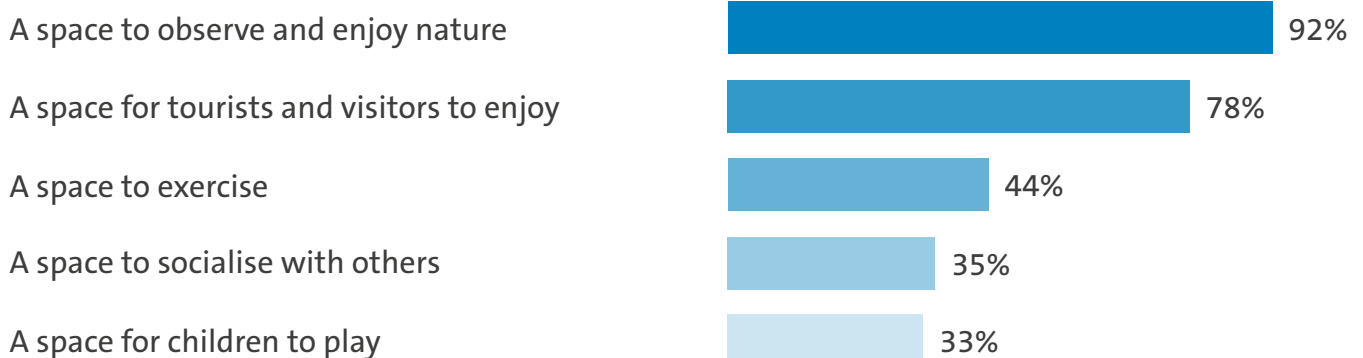
Point Lonsdale Foreshore

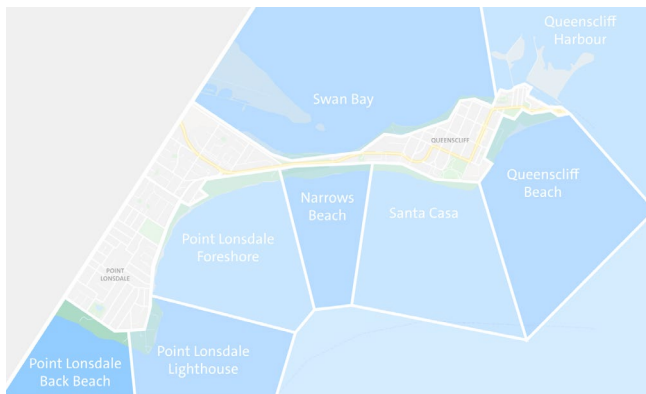
The Point Lonsdale Foreshore area was seen as one of the most family-friendly areas of the Borough’s coastline, rating highly as a space for children, visitors and residents to socialise and spend time together. While natural features rated highly on all beaches including this beach, they were less prioritised in this area compared to other coastal landscapes.



Point Lonsdale Lighthouse

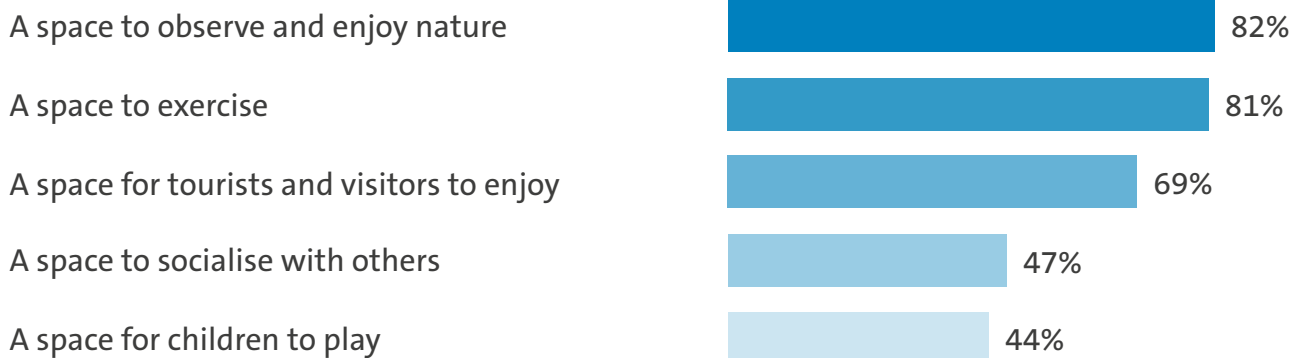
The striking natural features of the lighthouse and its surrounding area rated highly for respondents, who also saw these features as a drawcard for tourists and visitors.





Point Lonsdale Back Beach

Similarly to the Santa Casa and Narrows Beach areas, respondents saw the Point Lonsdale Back Beach as a primarily natural space but with a focus on exercise and recreation. Many respondents also saw the value of this beach as a draw card for visitors and groups to spend time together.



Other questions and submissions

Participants also had the opportunity to share extended comments and share any other feedback they had on the Coastal and Marine Management Plan. Because responses to this question were extremely varied, the contents of these responses are not included in this report. The full contents of open-ended questions and the five submissions received have been provided to relevant Council officers for consideration as they begin drafting the Plan.

Next steps

Council will use the feedback received to help draft the Borough of Queenscliffe Coastal and Marine Management Plan. This work will take several months, and will also draw on input from coastal leaseholders and the Wadawurrung.

In mid-2021, Council will release the draft Coastal and Marine Management Plan to the public for review and comment. Council will also explain how the feedback we received has influenced the Plan. Consultation participants who provided an email address will be notified directly as the project progresses.

Following public feedback on the draft Plan, officers will finalise the plan for formal consideration by Council in the second half of 2021.