

Creating the Thompsons Beach Masterplan

Purpose of the Masterplan

Thompsons Beach is one of Cobram-Barooga's most treasured natural spaces, enjoyed for its riverfront setting, open landscapes and connection to Kennedy Park. Recognised as Australia's largest inland beach, it is both a cherished everyday community destination and a regionally significant place on the Murray River.

To plan for its future and respond to growing visitation, Moira Shire Council is developing a new Masterplan that will guide long-term improvements to enhance usability, accessibility and environmental resilience across the precinct.

The Masterplan will establish a clear, community-endorsed vision and a set of priorities to inform future investment decisions - ensuring that Thompsons Beach continues to be a place the whole community can enjoy for generations to come.

Listening, Learning & Identifying Priorities

Community consultation was undertaken as part of the Thompsons Beach Masterplan to understand how the precinct is used, what people value most, and where improvements could be made in the future.

The feedback revealed a strong emotional connection to Thompsons Beach, with the beach, river and natural environment consistently identified as the site's most valued attributes. These insights, together with stakeholder input, previous studies and technical investigations, have helped identify six Key Moves for Thompsons Beach. The Key Moves bring together community aspirations, technical investigations and stakeholder feedback to explore future opportunities, test priorities and inform the next stage of Masterplan development.



What we heard included:

- Thompsons Beach is highly valued for its natural character, riverfront setting and open landscapes
- The beach, river and surrounding environment are the site's defining features and greatest assets
- The site serves both local residents and regional visitors, each with different needs and expectations
- Opportunities exist to improve the café precinct and visitor experience
- Safety and user conflicts are emerging concerns, particularly around water access and infrastructure
- Upgrades to boating, paddling, amenity and supporting infrastructure are desired
- Additional facilities for older children, teenagers and year-round users were identified as required
- Future investment should respect and strengthen the unique character of Thompsons Beach



Meet the Team



Local Government
Council

Tract

Landscape
Architecture
& Community
Engagement

urban
enterprise

Economics
& Tourism



The Masterplan Process

How are we creating the Masterplan?

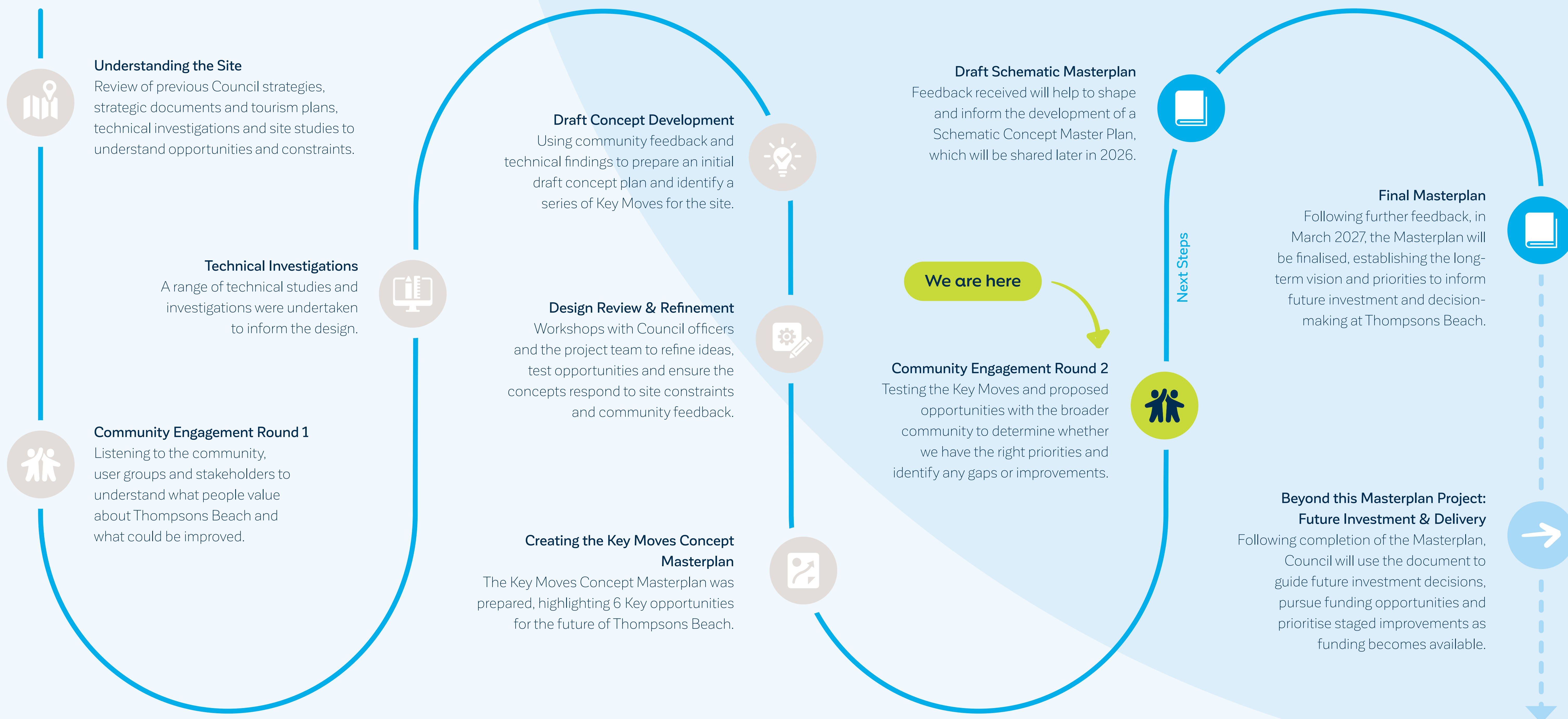
The purpose of the Thompsons Beach Masterplan is to establish the long-term vision and priorities to inform future investment and decision-making at Thompsons Beach.

Building on a range of previous Council and tourism strategies, technical investigations and site studies, the process incorporates community and stakeholder input to better understand the precinct's opportunities and constraints.

Six 'Key Moves' are designed to support further discussion about how Thompsons Beach is used today, what people value most, and what opportunities should be explored for the future.

The process invites community and stakeholders to help test ideas, identify priorities and concerns, and guide what should be explored further.

Feedback will inform the development of a draft schematic and then a final masterplan for Thompsons Beach.



Concept Masterplan Key Moves

To help shape the future of Thompsons Beach, six key moves have been identified through community and stakeholder feedback, previous studies, site analysis and investigations.

These moves bring together the main opportunities being explored through the Draft Concept Masterplan. We are now inviting community members, user groups and stakeholders to help test these ideas, identify priorities and concerns, and guide what should be explored further.



Create a destination food & beverage venue and community hub

01

If we were to explore upgrading facilities, what could the right scale, location, character, mix of food and beverage and community facilities look like for Thompsons Beach?

Establish a water activity and river-access hub

02

How can we improve safe and inclusive access for canoeing and paddle sports, boating, swimming and river recreation, supported by appropriate facilities and connections?

Expand recreation and social opportunities for all ages

03

Building on the success of the existing playground, how could we provide new opportunities for older children, teenagers and everyday users to play, explore, connect and be active?

Make access, arrival and movement safer and clearer

04

How could we improve how people arrive, park, walk, cycle and move safely between the beach, river, facilities and recreation areas? How could we improve connections to surrounding places and trails?

Explore nature-based recreation

05

How could we explore opportunities for recreation and visitor experiences that connect people with the landscape, while protecting its natural and cultural values?

Improve infrastructure for everyday and event use

06

How might amenities, services and flexible spaces better support everyday beach use, peak periods, community gatherings, and events?

01

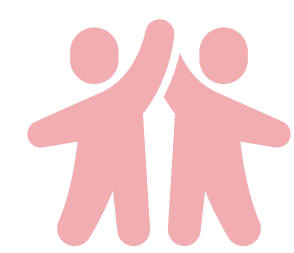
Key Moves

Create a destination food & beverage venue and community hub

Thompsons Beach has the potential to support a distinctive food and beverage venue connected to the Murray River landscape. This opportunity explores the appropriate location, scale and character of the venue, and whether community uses, canoe-club facilities and spaces for small gatherings could also be incorporated.

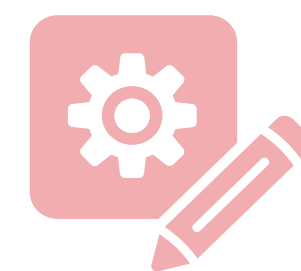
There is a gap between the community's love for the site and the infrastructure they find inadequate (a central tension to address in the Masterplan).

What we heard and learned



Community & User Groups

- 1 The beach, river and natural environment are the site's defining strengths and main reason people visit.
- 2 The café and hospitality offer is not meeting community expectations (in relation to reliability, quality, food/drink offering, dining capacity (including outdoor dining), and year-round operation.)
- 3 Desire for a signature venue that reflects the natural character of the Murray River setting. Comparable venues: Timber Cutters and Spoons were referenced. Future facilities should enhance rather than detract from arrival/river views.
- 4 People value the relaxed, peaceful and family-friendly character of Thompsons Beach
- 5 There is interest in community spaces that support social gatherings, activities/groups and events.
- 6 Combining the café, canoe-club and community gathering facilities would reduce the number of buildings, consolidate services and minimise visual clutter on site.
- 7 The Canoe Club is an important and established user group, requiring functional water access, storage and event-support facilities.



Previous Plans & Studies

- 1 Thompsons Beach is recognised as both an important everyday community place and a regionally significant Murray River destination.
- 2 Regional strategies seek to grow year-round tourism, strengthen riverfront destinations and encourage food & drink activation.
- 3 Tourism assessment recommends elevating the food & beverage offering to establish a destination venue in its own right (not just a seasonal café for beach visitors). Noted as a key driver for creating a year-round, "must-do" regional experience, and compelling reason to visit Cobram.
- 4 Strategic plans position Thompsons Beach as part of a broader network of river, paddling, walking, cycling, food and town-based experiences, rather than as an isolated destination.



Site & Project Learning

- 1 A central siting location is near the beach, parking, playground / family recreation area, with existing services nearby, and great access during event periods.
- 2 The existing arrival experience is focussed on the café's "back-of-house" and servicing areas. There is an opportunity for a more welcoming arrival that celebrates the beach and river.
- 3 The appropriate scale, capacity, and commercial feasibility of the venue requires further investigation.
- 4 Site Flooding needs to be considered in any future development (scale, floor levels & design).
- 5 Combining uses (cafe, community and canoe-club functions) would consolidate infrastructure. Storage, servicing and required river access needs for all users requires further review.
- 6 The Masterplan should avoid overdevelopment, and retain the beach, open space and natural landscape as the primary attraction. Siting should preference existing clearings to minimise impacts to flora/fauna and areas of native vegetation.

Existing Site Issues & Opportunities



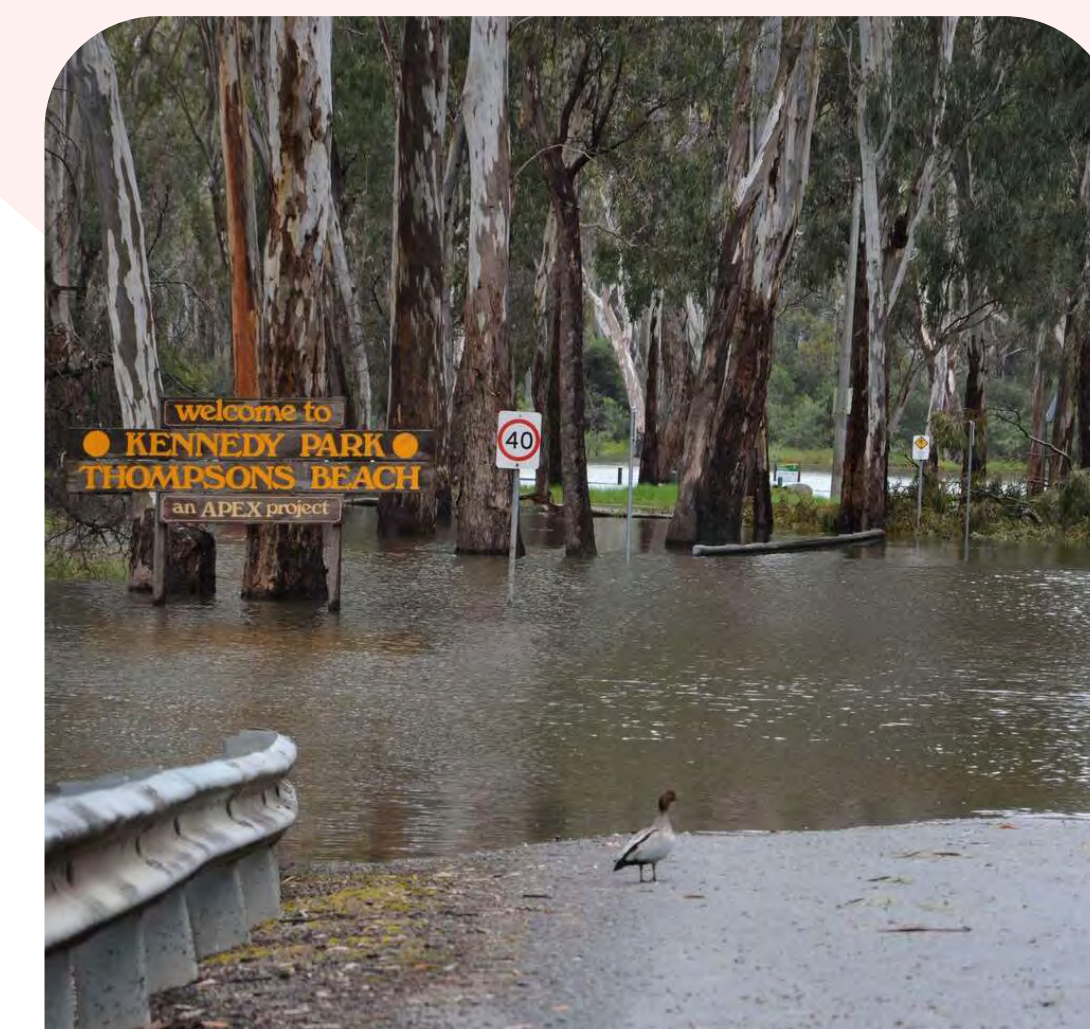
Arrival experience to site towards "back of house" cafe & services



Existing cafe river frontage / dining

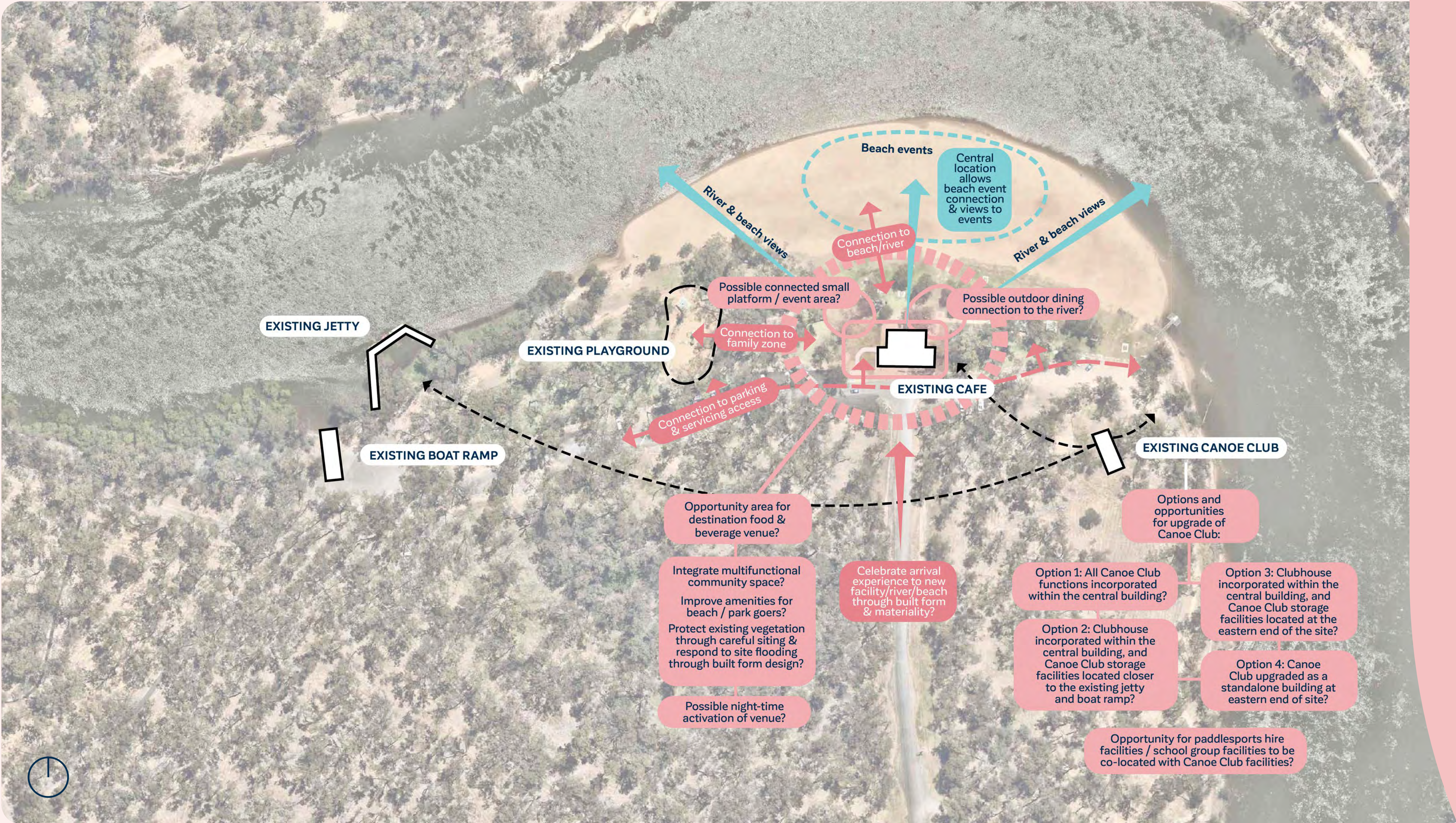


Existing Canoe Club - upgrades/storage required



Major Flooding at Site (Oct 2022) - Cafe impact

Help shape this opportunity



- 1 What scale of venue would feel appropriate for Thompsons Beach? Should the venue become a "destination" food and beverage venue for regional visitors/tourism as well as local community?
- 2 Should food and beverage, canoe-club and community uses be combined to reduce built footprints and share some facilities, or should they remain separate?
- 3 What are the storage & river access requirements for the Canoe Club? If the Canoe Club were combined with the café, is access to the river a problem at the central location, and would separate storage facilities elsewhere on site be preferred?
- 4 Should the facility remain open to support evening dining, functions and events?
- 5 What kind of community facilities would be desired as part of the venue?
- 6 Would a small stage/platform be desired for community recreation and hire? Where is the best location for this on site (should it be co-located with the main venue to reduce built form?)

Possible Precedent Opportunities



Outdoor dining with Murray River views (Spoons)



Materiality / Natural Character (The Bend)



Night time activation (Timbercutters)



Possible stage/platform for event hire & recreation

Opportunity for flood-responsive built form, with flood-tolerant lower levels and primary functional spaces located above the flood zone?

Possibility for upper level dining & views, with reduced built form at ground level (raised structure on stilts?) with provision of amenities and storage?

Use of natural materials?



Opportunity for a two-story building with spatial functions which respond to site surrounds and flood resilience?

Opportunity for upper level dining with river views?



**Additional
Precedent
Opportunities
for the food &
beverage venue**

Opportunity to incorporate publicly accessible terraced seating into the built form to allow social gathering and views to beach & water, with integrated stairway to access second floor dining? Terraced seating located along public promenade encourages public use, & incorporates public amenity. Gaps in built form encourage permeability of building?



Bundanon Art Museum, Tappin, NSW

Opportunity for flood-responsive built form (raised structure, partially on stilts)?

Built form that responds to site character?

Opportunity to integrate an accessible ramp to upper-level spaces by creating an elevated arrival experience?

Possible ramped boardwalk that weaves through and celebrates existing river red gums, becoming part of the landscape rather than simply connecting two levels?



Gallery of Mediathek, Georgia

Opportunity for permeable built form to allow views through building towards the water.

Possibility for a small accessible canteen to allow easy and inclusive access for beach goers at ground level?



South Melbourne Life Saving Club, VIC



South Melbourne Life Saving Club, VIC

Opportunity for an appropriately scaled "destination" food and beverage venue, which attracts visitation year-round?

Possibility for indoor/outdoor dining with upper level water/beach views? Opportunity for night time activation with events, DJs, and live music?



Burleigh Pavilion, Burleigh Heads, QLD

02 Key Moves

Establish a water activity & river-access hub

Thompsons Beach is an important place for swimming, paddling, fishing, canoeing and boating, and is identified as a priority location along the Murray River for a paddle sports hub.

This opportunity explores how river access could become safer, more inclusive and better coordinated for community, club and visitor use; while creating opportunities for regional connections, equipment hire, guided experiences, increased visitation and appropriate riverfront activation.

What we heard and learned



Community & User Groups

- 1 Water access and the river are central to why people use and value Thompsons Beach.
- 2 Existing boating and paddling facilities need improvement.
- 3 Safety and conflicts between water users, vehicles, trailers and pedestrians are concerns.
- 4 Low level launching of canoes is desired, as well as accessible launching opportunities for people with disabilities.
- 5 The canoe club requires increased storage for equipment and improved long-term functionality. The Club would benefit from better access to the river.



Previous Plans & Studies

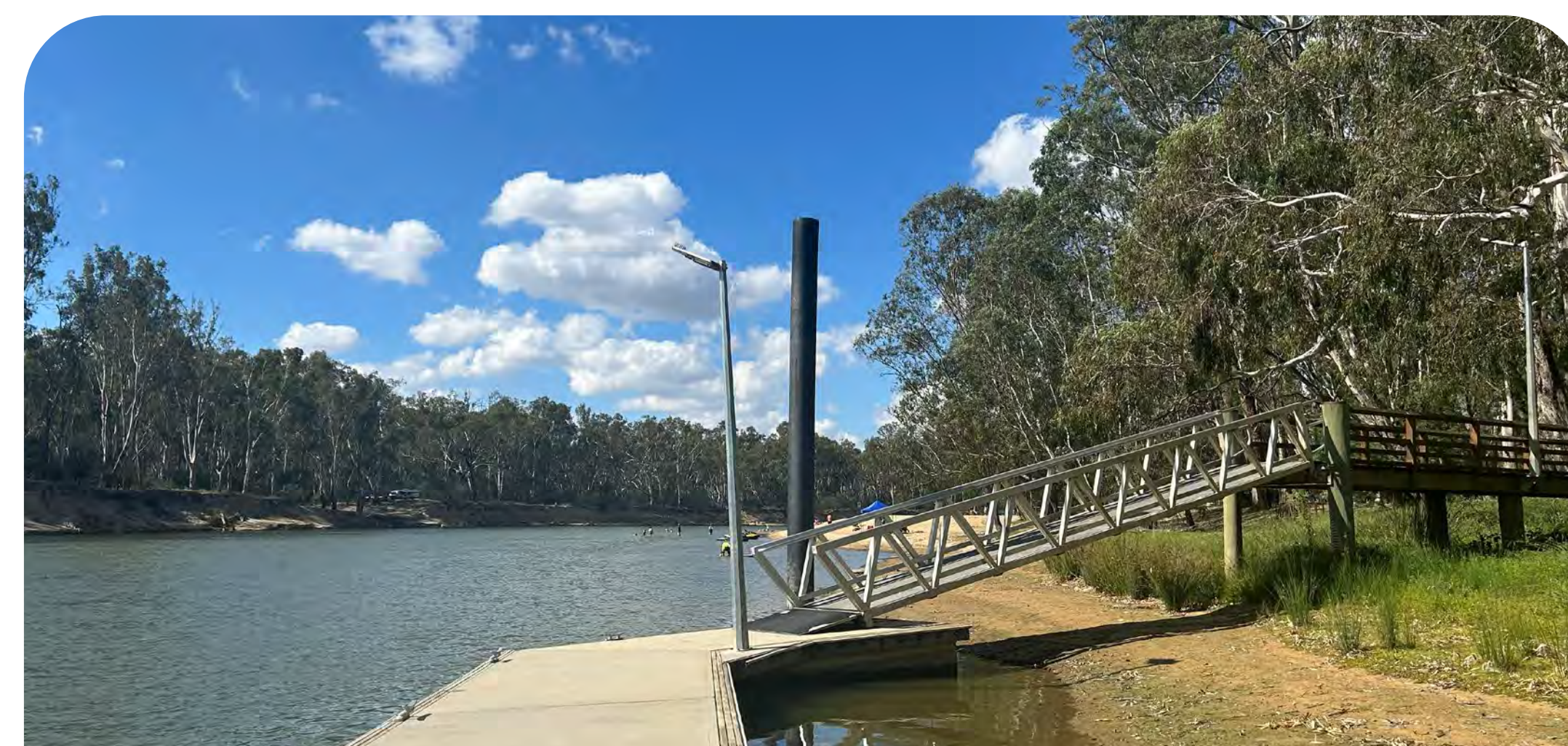
- 1 Regional tourism strategies identify Thompsons Beach as a priority location for a "paddle sports hub", with improved access and visitor facilities needed to strengthen the paddling experience (part of a broader regional network of paddling destinations along the Murray River).
- 2 Potential exists for equipment hire, guided tours and other nature-based river experiences (helping the site support both recreational use and broader Murray River visitor experience).
- 3 The Murray River Adventure Trail positions Thompsons Beach as one node within a connected network of walking, cycling and paddling experiences, supporting day trips and longer journeys between Murray River towns and destinations.
- 4 Cruising Strategies identify Thompsons Beach as having potential for improved river access & riverside activation to facilitate commercial cruising opportunities (encouraging visitors to move between destinations along the Murray River)



Site & Project Learning

- 1 The existing boat ramp requires upgrades for safety and functionality at changing river levels.
- 2 Opportunity for accessible jetty with floating pontoon and accessible entry points, to rise and fall with changing water levels/in response to flooding?
- 3 Trailer parking, turning movements and demand require further testing.
- 4 Pedestrian access and connections through the site should be reviewed to improve user safety
- 5 Possible opportunity for a small temporary or permanent hub for water-based activities/orientation and canoe hire, to be within proximity to car park & jetty facilities?

Existing Site Issues & Opportunities



Jetty Infrastructure - Re-locate or re-align to improve accessibility grades, extend/widen pontoon



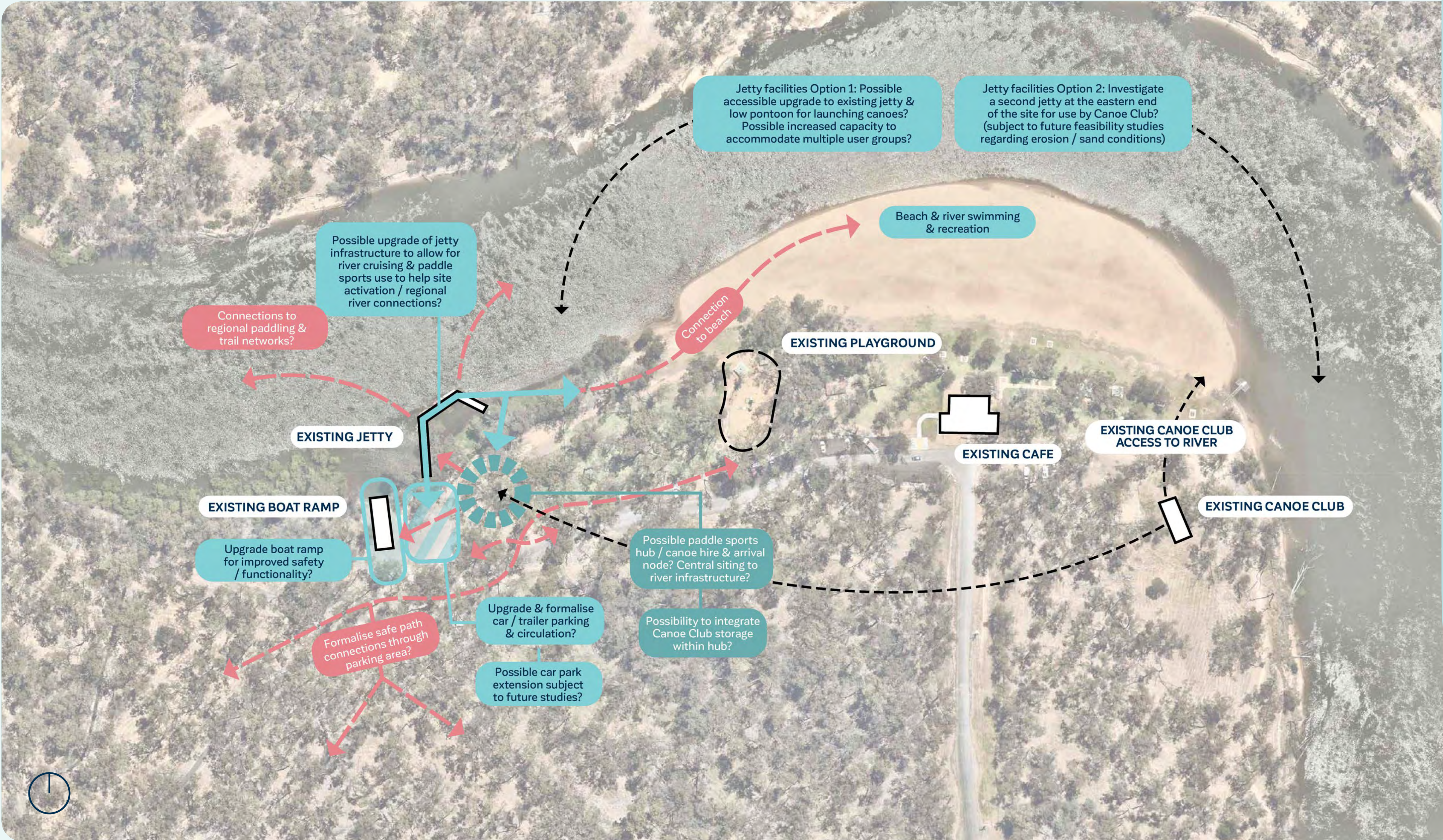
Boat Ramp Infrastructure - safety & access issues



Pedestrian + Vehicle Conflicts / Informal car + trailer parking

Help shape this opportunity

- 1 What boating and paddle sports infrastructure is required for public use, and where is this best located? (Where is the optimal entry/exit points for various river craft/groups?)
- 2 What improvements would make access to the river safer and more functional?
- 3 Would you support a larger, more accessible shared jetty and pontoon for community use?
- 3 Would separate storage facilities near the water activity hub (west of site) be desired by the Canoe Club?
- 5 What level of commercial activity (hire operators, guided tours, cruising services) feels appropriate?
 - Should the precinct support equipment hire, guided paddling or other water/nature based visitor experiences? Would a small facility near the Jetty be appropriate to enable this to operate?
 - Should the precinct support day cruising? What infrastructure is required and where? Would a separate mooring facility be required to the community use jetty or can it be shared?



Possible Precedent Opportunities



Accessibility / Easy entry Launch



Enhanced paddle sports experience / Hire facilities



Accessible Jetty and canoe launch (Albury Riverside)



Regional River linkages along the Murray River & its beaches

03 Key Moves

Expand recreation and social opportunities for all ages

The existing playground and picnic area are valued family facilities, but there are fewer opportunities for older children, teenagers and other everyday users. This opportunity explores how recreation could be broadened while retaining the natural landscape character.

What we heard and learned



Community & User Groups

- 1 The existing playground, picnic facilities and open spaces support family use.
- 2 Play / facilities for older children and teenagers are limited (there is interest in higher-challenge play, adventure play, informal recreation and places for young people to meet).
- 3 New recreation should not result in the loss of the natural character valued by the community



Previous Plans & Studies

- 1 Council's Play Space Strategy identifies opportunities to better cater for older kids (8-12 years) and tween/teen users within Cobram.
- 2 Regional strategies support active recreation, walking, cycling and links to broader trail systems.
- 3 Council's strategic planning identified an opportunity to incorporate fitness stations and exercise facilities as part of a broader recreation and trail network
- 4 Tourism assessments suggest opportunities to improve community recreation and visitor infrastructure, including walking, paddling and cycling trails, seating, shade, drinking fountains and picnic facilities
- 5 Studies suggest access to low cost or free activities / site opportunities would be of value to the community.



Site & Project Learning

- 1 The existing playground is positioned near the café, beach, picnic, BBQ and amenity facilities, making the central area a logical family-recreation node.
- 2 Opportunity to extend the existing play space within existing adjacent clearing to reduce tree removal and maintain passive surveillance for families?
- 3 Flood-compatible or elevated play elements may be more suitable than extensive built surfaces?
- 4 Opportunities for higher-challenge, nature-integrated play for older children/tweens/teens: including climbing, balancing, circuits, hammocks and social spaces (subject to youth needs)? Is the beach/river the preferred "play" area for older kids?

Existing Site Issues & Opportunities



Existing facilities catering for young children



Existing clearing adjacent existing playground - possible expansion



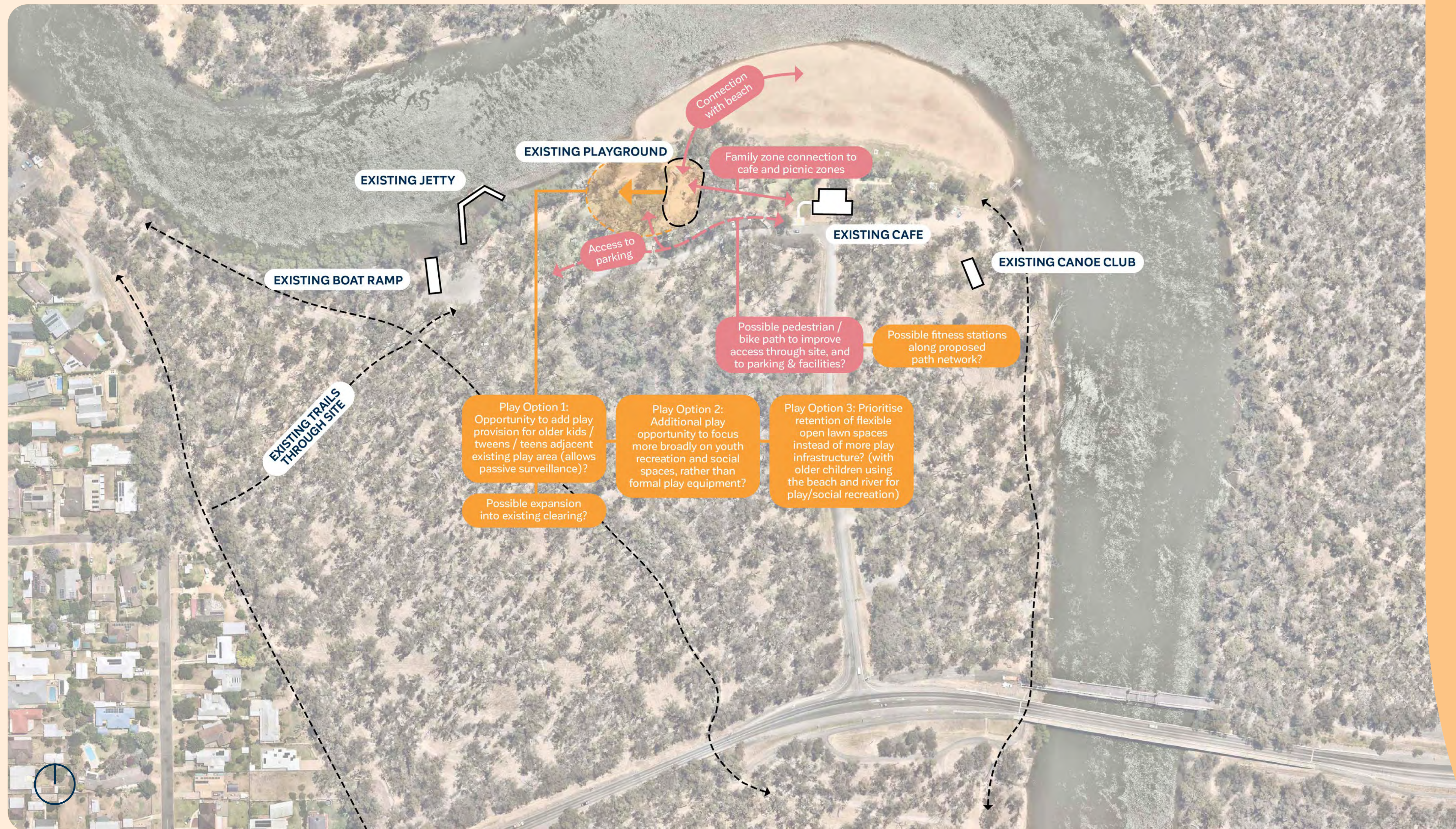
Close proximity of parking to play space amenity



Existing natural rock, log and planting borders

Help shape this opportunity

- 1 Which age groups are least catered for at Thompsons Beach today?
- 2 What types of play, recreation or social spaces would make the greatest difference?
- 3 What kinds of social spaces would young people and teenagers be most likely to use?
- 4 Should the additional play zone play be located in the clearing beside the existing playground or elsewhere? Would families prefer a central play zone for passive surveillance of mixed ages, or would they prefer to retain more grassed open space?
- 5 Would outdoor fitness stations or exercise facilities be valued?
- 6 Exploration required for the needs of older kids (do they prefer "play" on the beach/water rather than formal play elements?).
- 7 Do families prefer the retention of open green lawns more than additional formal play infrastructure?



Possible Precedent Opportunities



Higher challenge play / circuits



Flood resilience principles (Wagga Wagga Riverside)



Explore natural materials & bushland character



Opportunities for social connection for older kids / Tweens / Teens



Opportunity for fitness nodes along a regional path

04 Key Moves

Make access, arrival and movement safer and clearer

Thompsons Beach needs to work safely and comfortably for people arriving by foot, bicycle, car, bus, boat and paddle craft. This opportunity explores clearer arrival, safer movement, better connections and parking that responds to everyday and peak use.

What we heard and learned



Community & User Groups

- 1 The existing arrival does not immediately celebrate the beach and river setting.
- 2 Parking and traffic pressures increase during busy summer periods, school holidays and events.
- 3 Safety and user conflict are growing concerns: Pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and boat trailers currently share areas with limited separation
- 4 Connections between parking, facilities, playground and beach could be clearer and safer.
- 5 Walking and cycling connections to Cobram and the wider area are limited or fragmented.
- 6 Opportunity to provide a bike path and bike infrastructure (possible bike repair station.)
- 7 Signage and wayfinding are inconsistent and could better connect and explain the precinct.
- 8 Materiality should be aligned with the natural character of the site, and development should minimise disturbance to existing trees



Previous Plans & Studies

- 1 Previous masterplanning identified improved parking, pedestrian connections and stronger links between Thompsons Beach and Cobram as important opportunities.
- 2 The Murray River Adventure Trail identifies Thompsons Beach as a primary trailhead within a connected walking, cycling and paddling network linking Cobram, Barooga, Quinns Island and Tocumwal, and wider regional river locations.
- 3 Regional trail planning positions Thompsons Beach as a stopping point and access node within day-trip and multi-day visitor journeys
- 4 Clearer arrival, visitor information and wayfinding could help people find Thompsons Beach, move safely through the precinct and connect with Cobram and the wider Murray River trail network.



Site & Project Learning

- 1 Future site uses will influence parking and bus requirements/demands.
- 2 Existing informal overflow parking should be maintained, with possibility to explore other overflow solutions for peak periods.
- 3 Car/boat trailer parking and bus access, parking and turning requires further investigation. Possible realignment of road to east of site to increase usable foreshore areas?
- 4 Lighting must balance safety and function with the natural setting and ecological impacts (opportunity for replacement of flood lighting with wildlife-sensitive, low-level (amber) lighting; utilising controlled optics to minimise spill to protect fauna and waterways while maintaining safe, legible access.) Lighting to meet Council standards.
- 5 Proposed paths should follow existing grade where possible to minimise earthworks, and following alignments which minimise tree disturbance?
- 6 Opportunity to explore bike hire facilities to encourage land based recreation/activation?

Existing Site Issues & Opportunities



Gravel foreshore promenade only extends across part of site



No separated pedestrian/bike path through site



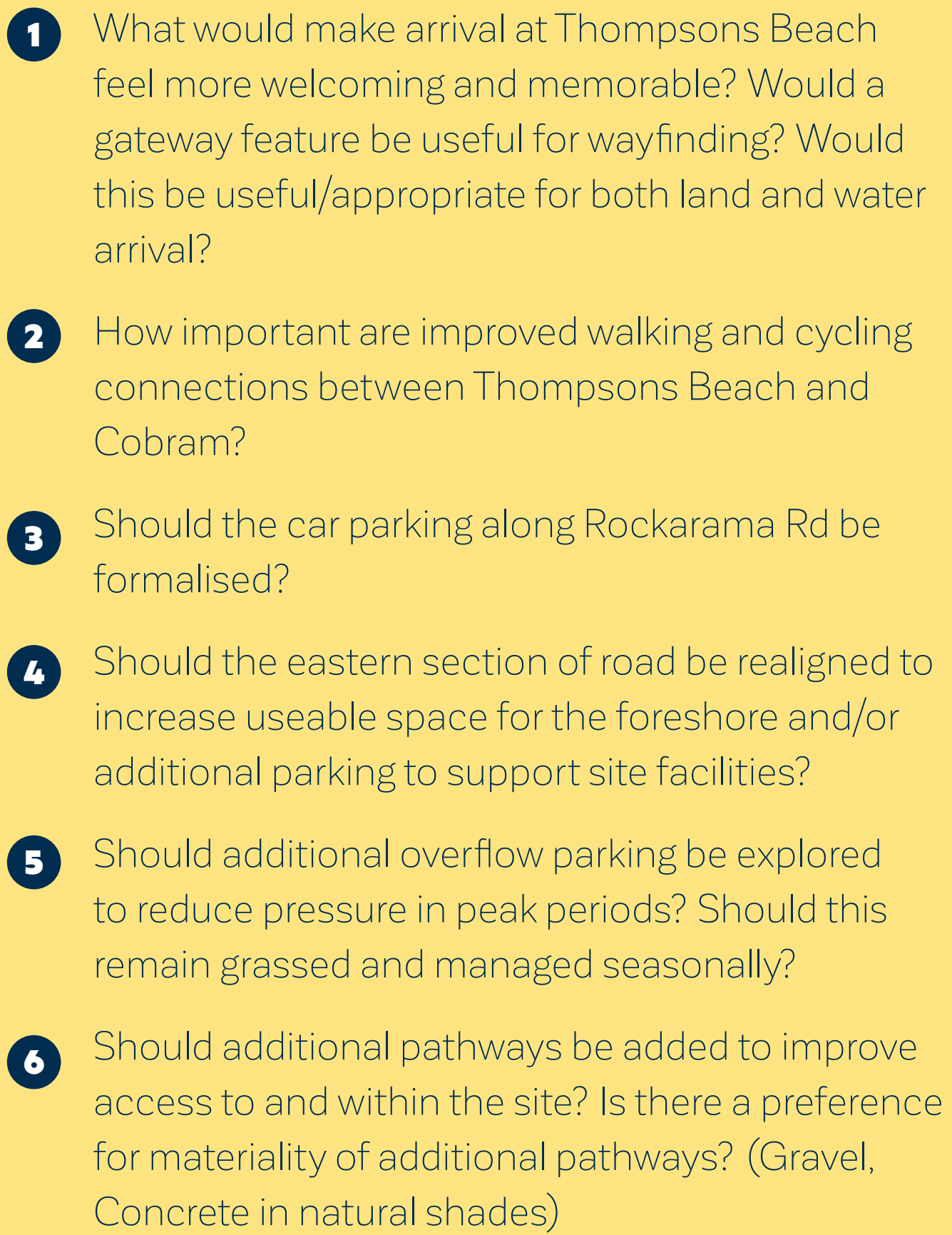
Opportunity to formalise parking & path, & naturalise rock bollards



Poor sense of arrival into site



Unclear & poorly sited wayfinding



Regional Trail connector through site + Trailhead marker



05

Key Moves

Explore nature-based recreation

The river, beach and red gum landscape are Thompsons Beach's greatest attractions. This opportunity explores whether carefully selected nature-based experiences could support community recreation, visitor activity and local economic benefit without compromising the qualities that make the place special.

What we heard and learned



Community & User Groups

- 1 The natural character of Thompsons Beach is its most highly valued quality.
- 2 People use the broader precinct for walking, cycling, dog walking, paddling, informal play and nature-based recreation.
- 3 There is concern about overdevelopment and the potential loss of quiet, natural and relaxed feel.
- 4 Future activity should protect habitat, significant trees and the natural river setting/views, while maintaining community access and enjoyment.



Previous Plans & Studies

- 1 Regional / tourism strategies identify nature-based recreation, eco-tourism and First Nations experiences as important opportunities for strengthening the Murray visitor economy and encouraging year-round visitation.
- 2 The Murray River Adventure Trail strengthens the regional nature-based recreation offer by connecting walking, cycling and paddling experiences along the Murray River (positioning Thompsons beach as part of a connected river landscape visitor network)
- 3 Opportunity for a privately operated tourism business to deliver an appropriate nature-based visitor attraction, building on the site's natural assets
- 4 The bushland contains mature vegetation, floodplain habitat and known cultural-heritage considerations.
- 5 The Murray Region Destination Management Plan identifies Traditional Owner-led tourism as an important regional opportunity (with cultural experiences that strengthen visitors' connection to Country)
- 6 A Cultural Heritage Management Plan confirms that Thompsons Beach sits within a culturally sensitive Murray River landscape. Two scar trees have been identified south of the site and would need to be avoided.



Site & Project Learning

- 1 Future planning may require further cultural-heritage, ecological, flood, planning and bushfire assessment?
- 2 First Nations stories and cultural values and opportunities need further input with Yorta Yorta Engagement (how should cultural knowledge and connection to Country inform future experiences?)
- 3 Future development upgrades may generate requirements for access, parking, servicing and potentially evening lighting?

Existing Site Issues & Opportunities



Existing recreational cycling through site



Celebrate and protect the River Red Gums



Protect Flora & Fauna & respect the natural setting

Help shape this opportunity



- 1 What types of nature-based recreation or visitor experiences feel appropriate for the bushland area of Thompsons Beach?
- 2 Should future nature-based experiences primarily benefit local recreation, tourism, or both?
- 3 What should the nature precinct focus on:
 - walks/trails (including guided walks/ activities, cultural walks, nature watching/wildlife discovery)?
 - a commercial eco-tourism attraction (by private operator)?
 - or a combination?
- 4 What characteristics would make a privately operated attraction appropriate for the site?
- 5 Which areas should remain quiet, natural and free from additional development?
- 6 What opportunities exist to better celebrate Yorta Yorta Country and connection to the Murray River? (how should cultural knowledge and connection to Country inform future experiences?)

Possible Precedent Opportunities



Guided Walks / Storytelling opportunities



Cultural Walks (Dharnya Centre, Yorta Yorta Country)



Wildlife discovery / Walking loops

06

Key Moves

Improve infrastructure for everyday and event use

Thompsons Beach already supports seasonal gatherings, events, recreation and community activity. This opportunity explores how better amenities, flexible spaces and discreet supporting infrastructure and services could support everyday use, peak periods, and make the site activation-ready for events.

What we heard and learned



Community & User Groups

- 1 Thompsons Beach has a long history as a gathering place and supports informal recreation, community celebrations and seasonal activity.
- 2 Existing events and peak visitation periods place pressure on parking, amenities, power requirements and circulation.
- 3 Community feedback highlighted the importance of shade, seating, toilets, change rooms, showers and other supporting amenities that enhance everyday use of the precinct.
- 4 Existing infrastructure upgrades are desired (in particular the boating and paddling infrastructure, softening/naturalising rocks to car park, improving amenities for beach goers)
- 5 There is interest in opportunities that allow for more community gatherings, programs and events/activities.



Previous Plans & Studies

- 1 Tourism assessments highlight opportunities to make the site "activation-ready", by providing suitable power, water and access infrastructure to support small and large events and service a quality food and beverage venue
- 2 Beach users would benefit from supporting infrastructure such as showers/change facilities, beach wash-down facilities and drinking water.
- 3 Event / recreational infrastructure could complement the café venue and support use outside peak daytime periods.
- 4 Parking and access improvements provide opportunities to improve site safety and circulation.



Site & Project Learning

- 1 Requirement for low impact, appropriately scaled interventions that respond to flooding and the natural environment. Siting should preference existing clearings to minimise impacts to flora/fauna and areas of native vegetation?
- 2 Event-readiness will need to consider services upgrades and waste management?
- 3 Evening lighting would require further safety and ecological consideration.
- 4 Bus drop-off, parking and pedestrian connections need to support event use?
- 5 There is opportunity to provide a small platform/stage to support recreation, community use and formalised event hire? To be potentially co-located with the new destination food and beverage venue to reduce built footprints and share servicing?
- 6 Existing lawn areas along the foreshore are used during event periods. Site activation should balance recreational & infrastructure needs with flexible open spaces.

Existing Site Issues & Opportunities



Site not "activation-ready" for events



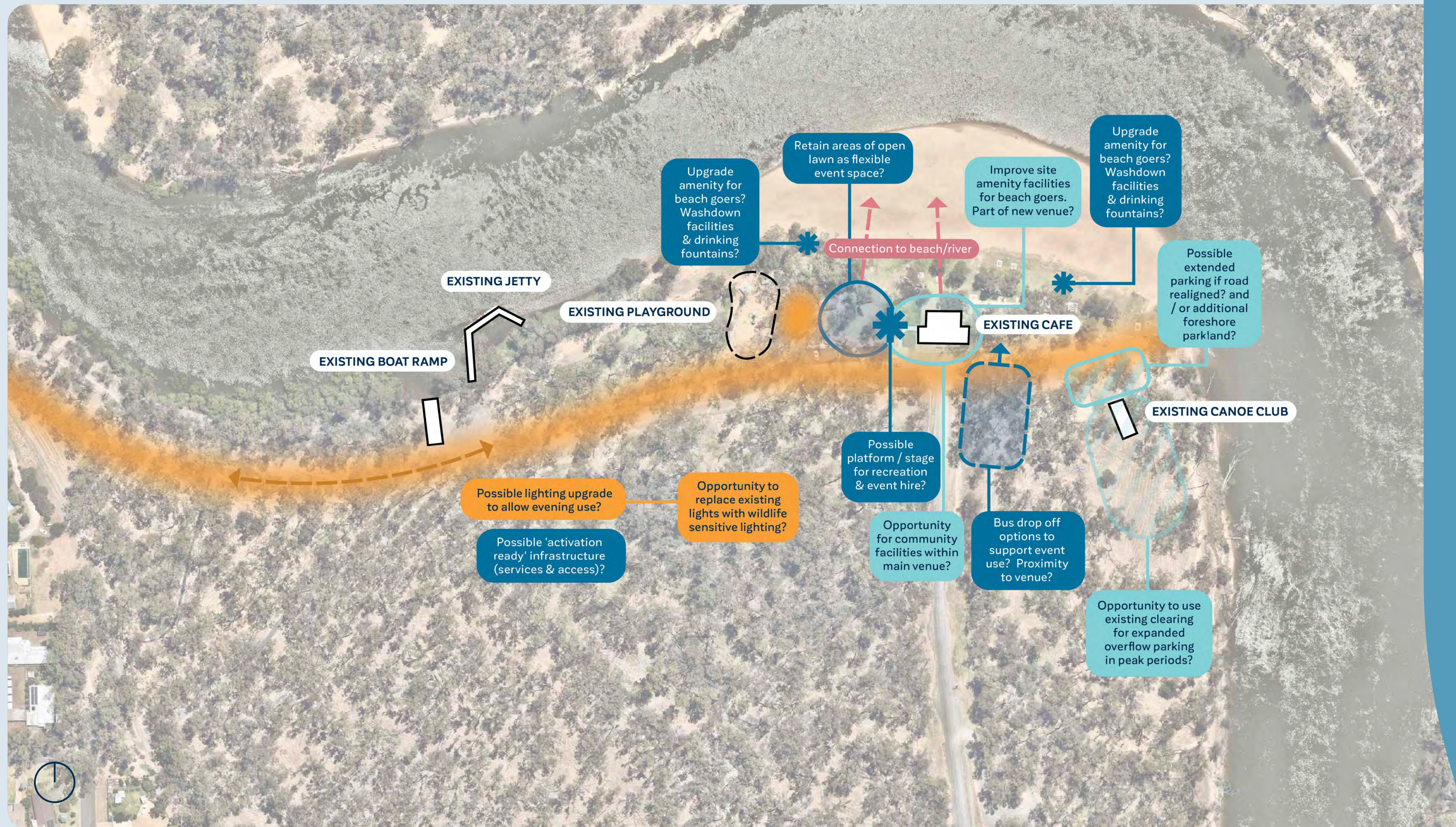
Site currently requires open space for event set up



Popular destination in peak summer / event periods

Help shape this opportunity

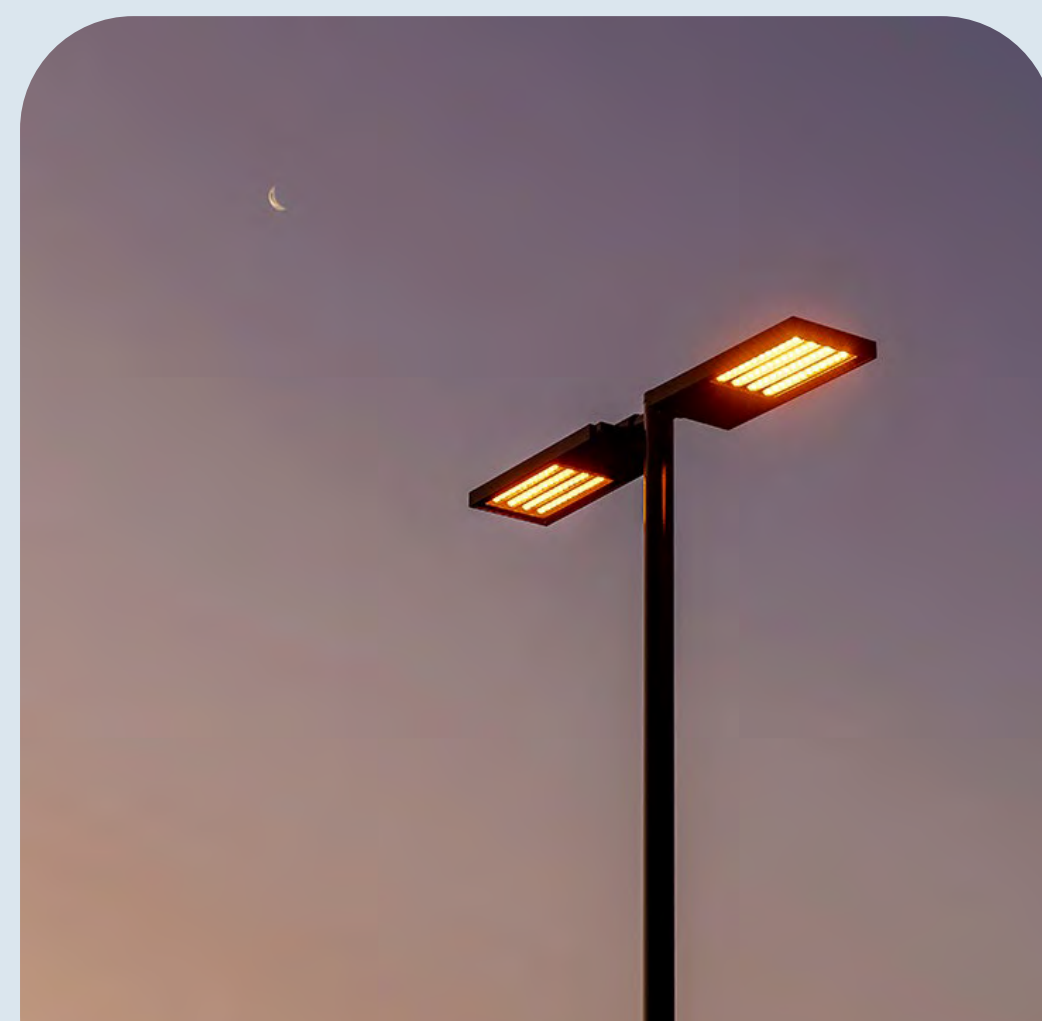
- 1 What types of community gatherings or events does (and should) Thompsons Beach precinct support?
- 2 What infrastructure improvements are needed to better support community events and peak visitation periods? (to be "activation-ready")?
- 3 What size /extent of open lawn areas are required to remain flexible for events/recreation and informal use?
- 4 What supporting facilities would most improve the beach experience for everyday use (showers, change facilities, drinking water, shade, seating, BBQs)?
- 5 Is a small stage or gathering platform desirable (for community hire/event use)? Should this be integrated into the food & beverage venue to reduce built footprints and share facilities, or would a location elsewhere be preferred?
- 6 Is evening activation of the main food and beverage venue / community facilities desired?
- 7 If only a few infrastructure upgrades could be delivered first, what should those priorities be?



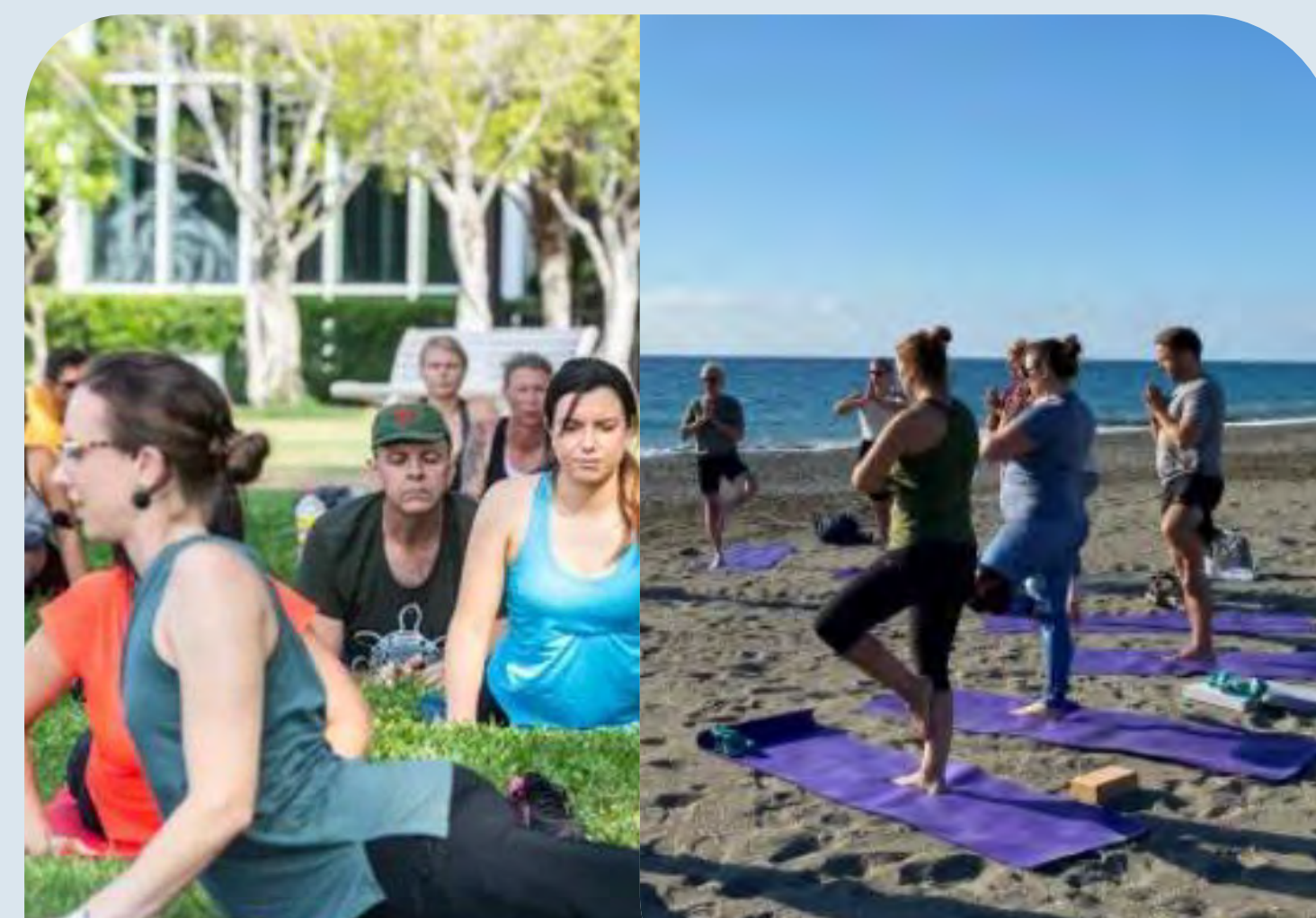
Possible Precedent Opportunities



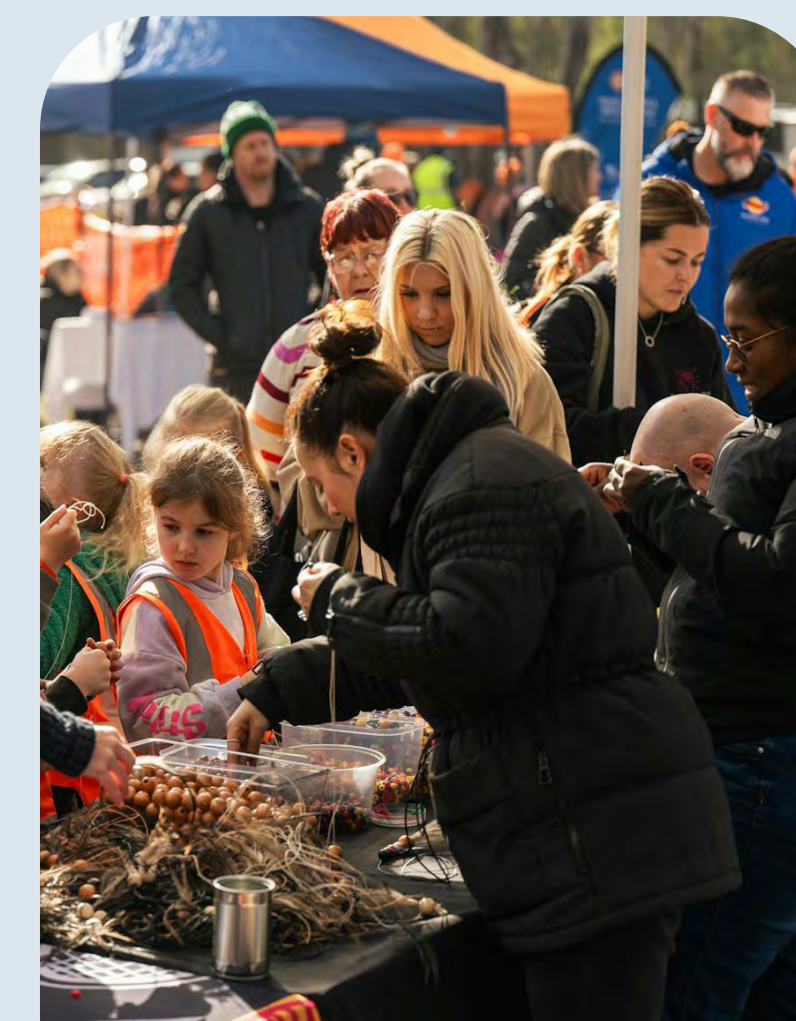
Beach Infrastructure / Wash-down



Wildlife sensitive lighting to support night activation



Spaces for wellness activities



Support Community Events



Seasonal Beach installations (Moseley Beach Club)