

Project background

The Victorian Government has committed more than \$500 million to deliver new and expanded women's and children's facilities in Geelong.

The new Barwon Women's and Children's will provide world-class women's health (including maternity) and paediatric services and deliver additional capacity to ensure families in Geelong and surrounding communities can continue to access the very best care, close to home.

Managed by Barwon Health, the new Barwon Women's and Children's will be built within the University Hospital Geelong precinct. It will provide:

- more maternity inpatient beds
- more paediatric multi-day/same day inpatient beds
- more special care nursery cots
- more birthing suites
- more operating theatres
- expanded paediatric and maternity specialist (outpatient) facilities.

Purpose of the report

The Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA), in partnership with Barwon Health, is committed to providing the local community with meaningful opportunities to provide input into this significant project and has undertaken a comprehensive consultation process throughout the design of the Barwon Women's and Children's.

An online community survey on the [Engage Victoria website](#) was one of several opportunities for the local community to share the ideas and priorities of Geelong and surrounds and to help shape the new Barwon Women's and Children's.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of what we heard through the community survey and share community ideas and priorities that will be considered in the design for the new Barwon Women's and Children's.

The community's influence

The survey has sought and considered input on key areas of the design of the Barwon Women's and Children's including patient and family experience, indoor and outdoor spaces, accessibility and wayfinding.

The input captured in this report will be shared with the project team with the opportunity for feedback to be reflected in the final design of the Barwon Women's and Children's.

How we engaged

The VHBA led a community survey on the Engage Victoria portal from 24 October to 24 November 2023, to seek community input on what they would like to see in key areas of the new Barwon Women's and Children's.

The survey was published online via Engage Victoria and was promoted across the VHBA and Barwon Health social media channels, and shared with community and stakeholder groups via the Community Consultative Committee.

There were 422 survey submissions received.

Summary of feedback received

- **Clear wayfinding signage.**

Over 90 per cent of all respondents agreed that clear wayfinding signage was the highest priority in helping patients and visitors find their way around the new Barwon Women's and Children's.

- **Outdoor areas are essential to a positive healthcare experience.**

Several features were agreed to be priorities which include the outdoor and/or terrace areas accessible by patients and visitors including trees and plants (89 per cent), seating and benches (89 per cent), children's play areas (83 per cent) and weather protection (78 per cent).

- **Feeling welcome and quiet waiting spaces.**

73 per cent of respondents told us that quiet and private spaces were what they would most like to see in the indoor waiting areas, while 85 per cent said that food and drink options would make them feel that welcome and supported.

What we heard

Topic	What we heard
Accessibility	Respondents indicated a preference for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Access to bike parking in obvious and safe areas.- Close by, well lit, free carparking.- Proximity to public transport.- Transportation options to and from appointments.- Taxi rank, drop off pick up zone close to the entrance.
Welcoming space	Respondents indicated a preference for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clear wayfinding signage in multiple languages.- Ample food and drink options.- Reception/check-in to provide wayfinding information.- LGBTQIA+ representation and inclusive signage.- Consideration of different cultural needs such as prayer rooms.- Access to all gender bathrooms.

Topic	What we heard
Family friendly spaces	<p>Respondents indicated a preference for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quiet and private spaces in waiting areas. - Fun, interactive play areas for children including fish tanks. - Breastfeeding areas with comfortable chairs and spaces to clean and store pumping equipment. - Sensory spaces for neurodiverse children. - Pet-friendly areas for service animals and for family pets to be able to visit. - Access to power points and charging stations.
Artwork	<p>Respondents indicated a preference for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works created by local or First Nations artists. - Areas for showcasing children's/inpatients art on rotation. - Imagery/art representative of Geelong community and local scenery. - Interactive art that children can contribute to.
Landscaping	<p>Respondents indicated a preference for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lush, calming, green plants. - Shade for hot days and weather protection from rain. - Soothing water features.

Other comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comments, with the following themes emerging:

Feeling welcome

“Carparking, close, well lit, with security cameras and or security personnel frequenting the area. Alternatively access to a shuttle bus for staff and patients to long term parking.”

- **25** per cent of additional comments relating to feeling welcome were about **transport and car parking**.

“Pregnancy is one of the greatest risk situations for women. Being aware and respectful of Queer communities, not all parents are heterosexual couples and images need to be inclusive and diverse.”

- **22** per cent of additional comments relating to feeling welcome were about **accessibility and inclusivity**.

Indoor waiting areas

“It would be lovely to see something at Barwon Health that creates a warm and welcoming space for children rather than something that is too clinical and can become easily overwhelming and frightening for them.”

- **21 per cent** of additional comments relating to indoor waiting rooms were about making them **child friendly**.

“There needs to be facilities for women to breastfeed or express breastmilk, in comfort and with dignity, designed into this facility.”

- **16 per cent** of additional comments relating to indoor waiting rooms were about **comfort and privacy**.

Outdoor areas

“Make the areas as quiet, relaxing and private as possible. Calming colours, water features.”

- **21 per cent** of additional comments relating to outdoor areas were about **calming water features**.

“High Safety rails/fences. No surfaces that could be climbed on due to risk of falling/jumping. Soft flooring. Space for parents to stretch and breathe.”

- **17 per cent** of additional comments relating to outdoor areas were about **safety and comfort**.

Wayfinding

“Use different themes/colour palettes to differentiate different areas.”

- **24 per cent** of additional comments relating to wayfinding mentioned **colour to help navigation**.

“Someone to ask that can access interpreters including Auslan.”

- **20 per cent** of additional comments relating to wayfinding mentioned **different languages and braille options**.

Art

“Displays from current inpatients that choose to contribute. Artworks could be rotated monthly.”

- **20 per cent** of additional responses relating to art mentioned **child or inpatient art**.

“A water fountain or water feature would be calming in the outdoor space.”

- **12 per cent** of additional responses relating to art mentioned **water features or aquariums**.

What we’re doing next

The project is currently in the design phase, and the ideas and priorities captured in the survey – together with the input gathered through other consultation forums – will be considered when developing the final design of the new Barwon Women’s and Children’s.

Conclusion

Input from the community obtained via the survey has provided the Barwon Women’s and Children’s project team with:

- a clearer understanding of the priorities for Geelong and surrounding communities.
- ideas and a vision for key spaces and areas in new Barwon Women’s and Children’s.
- the issues and concerns that matter to seeking safe and accessible healthcare in Geelong and surrounding communities.

For more information about the new Barwon Women's and Children's visit the project webpage at www.vhba.vic.gov.au/health/hospitals/barwon-womens-and-childrens or email bwcproject@health.vic.gov.au and request to be added to the mailing list.