

Rushall Reserve – Path extension review – 29 August 2019

The Council resolution of 19 March 2019 requested that officers provide 'a review of whether or not the existing asphalt path through the reserve should be removed, or rather, retained, extended or replaced with turf'.

Path Removal or retention

The original concern from park users was that if the shared path proceeded there would be a loss of usable parkland. This led to the idea to remove the existing asphalt path to mitigate against the extra hard surface being introduced into the reserve. Now that the shared path is not proceeding, the existing asphalt path provides the only accessible entry into the reserve, and a hard surface for maintenance vehicles to access infrastructure and garden beds.

Path Extension

Previous consultation in relation to the shared path project asked park users whether the existing asphalt path should be extended down to the waters edge. This idea received some support.

Pros

- Park users would be able to walk on a hard surface to the waters edge, with views of the significant rock formation.
- Dogs can enter the river from this point.

Cons

- A formal path would further encourage dogs into a valuable wildlife habitat area.
- The path would be in the Land Subject to Inundation zone – leading users into a higher risk area.
- The area near the creek is damp, becomes flooded in high flows, and is where an open stormwater drain discharges into the river. Regardless of the surface, it is likely to be damp and slippery throughout the wet months due to the location, dampness and leaf litter.
- A steep asphalt path could potentially be more slippery in the wet, and cause greater injury if someone were to slip and fall.
- Due to the natural slope, existing native vegetation, and the location of the stormwater outlet, the grade of a new path would need to be approximately 1:5 (20%) at its steepest. The recommended maximum accessible grade is 1:14 (7.14%) for a maximum of 9m length, and steepest recommended grade for a short ramp into a building is 1:10 (10%). The recommended maximum gradient for a shared path is 1:20 (5%). To meet acceptable grades for the path, the footprint for the path would need to expand and require the removal of native vegetation in that area.
- Melbourne Water guidelines recommend new paths proposed in the creek corridor be set back from the top of the stream bank to protect the 'riparian fringe' (creek banks) from 'undue human impact'.
- MW guidelines require new paths to be clear of the 1 in 10 flood zone – a path to the creek would be within the 1 in 10 flood area.

Recommendations:

1. Retain the existing asphalt path to provide accessible access into Rushall reserve and continued maintenance vehicle access.
2. Do not extend the path down to the creek as this would cause further damage to the creek corridor habitat area, increase access by dogs to the detriment of wildlife (particularly birds), and not be able to meet suitable standards for safety and path accessibility.

Image 1 – End of the existing asphalt path



Image 2 – Existing track to the river edge



Image 3 – Existing stormwater outlet

Image 4 – Merri creek water edge and rock formation

