

MERRI CREEK

CONCEPT PLAN

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



MELBOURNE
Parks & Waterways

Merri Creek Concept Plan

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT

March 1993

Prepared by

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Cover Photograph by David Tatnall

for

**Melbourne Water &
Merri Creek Management Committee**

FOREWORD

This report is the result of research undertaken for the preparation of the Merri Creek Concept Plan. It has been researched and produced by independent consultants and as such the conclusions and recommendations arrived at are not in any way binding upon Melbourne Parks and Waterways, the Merri Creek Management Committee or other agencies. The report provides a detailed base of both knowledge and expert opinion not only for the development of the Concept Plan but also for ongoing decision making and public information purposes.

The Merri Creek Concept Plan is a visionary document which provides the direction for development of the linear parkland along the Creek as an open space haven accessible to all the community.

The Concept Plan was prepared as part of the Parks and Waterway Program (formerly the Open Space 2000 Program) with Melbourne Parks and Waterways as lead agency, in conjunction with the Merri Creek Management Committee. The Consultant's studies were managed by a series of working groups with agency and community representation, reporting to an overall Concept Plan Reference Committee. The Reference Committee comprised representatives of Melbourne Water, the Merri Creek Management Committee, the municipalities of Whittlesea, Broadmeadows, Preston, Coburg, Brunswick, Northcote, Fitzroy, Collingwood and the Friends of Merri Creek and other community interests.

Merri Creek rises in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range some 60km north of Melbourne at Wallan and flows south to its junction with the Yarra River at Dights Falls. The catchment is rural in the north with the small townships of Wallan, Beveridge and Kalkallo located near the creek. Further south is the larger town of Craigeburn and the expanding northern suburbs of Melbourne. The land use surrounding Merri Creek changes along its course from pastoral to industrial and urban. The issues affecting the creek reflect this changing pattern of landuse. Merri Creek and its immediate surrounds are an important resource with natural values and opportunities for recreation for the surrounding community.

The Concept Plan covers the Creek and its immediate environs from the Yarra River to the northern boundary of Whittlesea. It sets out an agreed strategic framework for actions and development along the Creek, which is acceptable to all organisations responsible for the management of the Creek, and realistically expresses the community wishes.

The implementation of the Concept Plan will ensure that resources are used in an effective and co-ordinated manner. The vision for Merri Creek requires long term commitment and planning by all land owners and land managers along the Creek and within the catchment and by community organisations.

MERRI CREEK CONCEPT PLAN

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1. Summary of findings and recommendations

In October to December 1992 a community consultation was undertaken along the Merri Creek in the municipalities from Collingwood to Whittlesea, concentrating on the perspectives of young people, people who mainly speak a language other than English and special interest groups. Young people were consulted through schools: both primary and secondary. NESB (non-English speaking background) groups were consulted at their group meetings, on site and through ethnic community workers. Special interest groups were consulted through a postal survey. The questionnaires were processed and cross tabulated by Oz Info Pty Ltd.

All groups consulted indicated that they visited the Merri Creek more than other parks implying that the Merri was the best opportunity for spending time in the open. This has great implications for providing young people and people fairly new to Australia an opportunity to become familiar with the Australian environment - they are not frequent visitors of other parks and therefore open space awareness programs run through other parks would have little or no impact in reaching these people.

The preferences expressed by the different groups are consistent with the main objectives and directions being pursued by the Merri Creek management ie: that the Merri Creek should be an area where importance should be given to nature and that human activity should be conducive to a natural, relaxing "away from urbanisation" environment.

The preferences given very high priority by all NESB groups include human facilities that enhance the quality of time spent outdoors and assist the appreciation of the natural environment. These include picnic areas and to a lesser extent barbeques. Other features that are desired by sections of the community, and most notably the Middle East groups are more drinking taps, toilets and children's playgrounds.

The most unpopular features (in order of unpopularity) are: formal sports facilities, areas for trail bikes, dog walking and kiosks. With only some exceptions, respondents feel that these features would detract from the peaceful nature of the waterway and kiosks are not favoured due to their potential for generating litter.

A major discrepancy that arose in the consultation was the interest for community vegetable gardens. From group discussions there appeared to be a strong interest for more such gardens yet the questionnaire indicated that there was a low interest. The reasons given for responding negatively were not so much that people do not want the gardens, rather they are concerned with potential vandalism.

The strongest requests for improving the Creek are to eliminate litter, pollution and establish more vegetation. Dogs are unpopular amongst a significant proportion of the community, yet are also highly valued amongst others. Some people are deterred from using the Creek as it is perceived to be unsafe.

Recommendations:

There is a great deal of support from the community in the main direction adopted by the Merri Creek Management Committee and therefore these lines should be continued. Revegetation is encouraged, together with some areas being set aside for nature. People would like to have some areas for passive recreation such as picnic areas, to a lesser extent barbeque areas and some

children's playgrounds. Design details should be finalised as they are at present: by consulting the community. Programs that require more emphasis and resourcing are litter and pollution control programs.

Improvements to the Merri Creek and the resolution of conflicting interests are greatly dependent on the community. Some of the issues that need to be resolved jointly with the community are:

- whether dogs are to be permitted on the Creek, and if yes, should there be special conditions?
- how to stop litter and identifying the real sources of litter,
- what is required for people to feel safer when they visit the Creek.

As this consultation was carried out, it was seen that the efforts put in by the Merri Creek Management Committee would be greatly enhanced or greatly reduced depending on the attitudes of the community. For example, revegetation activities and litter control can be more "owned" by the community if they can be involved, but there can be retaliation from the community if litter controls are enforced and there is not adequate awareness as to the reasons of these controls. Programs reaching out to the community are essential and the employment of a community outreach worker will make the efforts of the management and staff much more effective.

The issues raised in this consultation need to be followed up through ongoing consultation. Attitudes of the community will change and so too will the community profile, consultation as an ongoing process is necessary for programs to be most effective. Opportunities at community plantings and other events could be taken to maintain discussion about the issues raised.

Finally, it was seen that the Merri Creek offers the greatest opportunity for most local residents to gain direct experience about Australia's ecosystems. Community education programs conducted by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Melbourne Water or other open space programs would be most effective in reaching the NESB community and young people in the Merri Creek catchment if channelled through agencies such as MCMC.

2. Recommendations

Litter and pollution

The control of litter and pollution along the Merri Creek stood out to be most needing improvement. There was a significant lack of awareness as to where much of this litter and pollution came from, which means a litter and pollution awareness program is needed. The most effective means of running such a program would be through schools; this topic fits in very well with many parts of the curriculum and an appropriately planned program could be effective in reaching the wider community. It is difficult for individual schools or teachers to develop their own litter and pollution program and there would be much duplication of effort. Development of such a program would be most effective if coordinated by an education officer employed by the Merri Creek Management Committee.

Vegetation

More trees and bushland ranked highest for what people like along the Creek, and second highest to what people think needs improving. There was strong support for planting programs already happening. These programs need to be maintained and preferably expanded. The respondents felt strongly about the need for more (mostly native) vegetation and in many cases how plantings were designed. The drawing up of detailed plans need to be carried out following consultation with the local community, where one exists. This is important for winning residents rather than getting them off side. Also, there is a need to maintain bushland and grassed areas, with weeding and/or mowing after the effort has gone into establishing them.

Strong support exists for setting some areas aside for nature in each of the municipalities, but the community wants the entire Creek to have a natural feel. Three zones: 1. Wildlife priority, 2. Wildlife buffer and 3. Human recreational could be established to meet the variety of preferences.

Koori network

The Kooris made use of the Merri for activities with their children to reconnect with the land. They were also pleased to extend these activities to other children and heighten awareness of Koori contact with the land and especially the Merri. The maintenance and strengthening of informal links with the Koori community will enable relationships to grow and awareness to increase.

Safety promotion

Several suggestions for developing a safer Merri Creek include:

- Creation of a “Merri Watch” program. This could follow the Neighbourhood Watch program with reporting of: the dumping of litter, pollution from drains, unpleasant experiences etc.
- Appointment of a Ranger. This was suggested by several people through discussions when the safety aspect arose, yet it was not mentioned in any of the questionnaires.
- Creation of safe hubs. In some ways there are two strong requests which appear to conflict for the future of Merri Creek: One is that people want areas of isolation and quiet, and the other is that people want areas where there is human activity and they can feel safe, with isolated areas being areas where they feel unsafe. One is virtually mutually exclusive of the other.

With the creation of safe hubs, there can be areas to cater for those that need to feel safer and the rest of the Creek being left “undeveloped”. Features that can contribute to an area not feeling isolated are barbeques, picnic areas, community vegetable gardens, children’s playgrounds, sport ovals. The positioning of toilets is very important and comments have shown that there are

problems with toilets being too close to children's playgrounds.

With certain areas being developed and others left undeveloped, it makes it possible to cater for one of the strong requests: that some areas be set aside exclusively for nature.

Dogs

Dogs are a special companion for spending time along the Creek for some people, and a deterrent for visiting by others. Dog litter and unleashed dogs were the greatest problems. This topic requires more detailed consultation with the community. Possible solutions include: limited hours or sites for dogs, the banning of unleashed dogs, litter bags. This consultation is a potential project that could be carried out by students.

Picnic areas and childrens playgrounds

Merri Creek needs to have a variety of picnic and barbeque facilities to cater for the diverse need of the community. It appears that the needs would be met by:

- a distribution of small "neighbourhood" picnic areas, no shelters and no barbeques
- approximately one well serviced picnic, barbeque area per municipality, no built shelter but shade from trees
- one or two highlight picnic areas along the Creek. These are to cater for group functions, provide all facilities including toilets and shelter.

There is high demand for children's playgrounds to also have facilities such as seating and shade nearby to cater for adults. As with other points mentioned, final plans need to be made in consultation with the community.

Toilet design

The unsafe feeling created by metropolitan park toilets could largely be avoided if they are designed more on the National Parks design:

- they are usually single toilets which are adequate for most park visitor populations.
- they are not walled to the ground which means a person can check for a pair of feet if they feel they need to.

An additional recommendation is that the toilet door opens directly to the outside and that there is no foyer. If taps need to be installed, these can be included in the toilet section. It would be desirable to have careful landscaping of plants around the toilet to screen the unnatural structure and so that a person can exit without being in full view of other park visitors. In this way, toilets are smaller, less of a visual intrusion and most probably cheaper than current park toilets.

Community Vegetable Gardens

Due to strong demand for community gardens in the lower reaches of the Merri, but a shortage of space in that section, liaison is necessary with the relevant municipalities to communicate this request. This liaison also applies for the middle, currently being developed section of the Merri since requests for community vegetable gardens may arise in the future. There is a major difference in the middle section, in that the house blocks are larger than the lower reaches. However consideration still needs to be given to the matter in the middle and upper reaches since it can be seen that community vegetable gardens are popular in areas such as Nunawading where they serve as a resource for building community networks.

Where space is available along the Merri for community gardens, the gardens need to be established through strong communication between community groups, the Merri Creek Management

Committee and the relevant municipality. Matters such as soil erosion, chemical use, weed control, etc need to be discussed.

Development of youth program

* In retrospect, there would have been tremendous benefits if the consultation was conducted by school groups with the assistance of a consultant. Senior students could have designed the questionnaire, organised distribution, consulted community groups and been responsible for the analysis. This would have raised their awareness about the variety of community preferences and the importance of collaborative decision making. Further consultations for the Merri could be conducted by students.

* The Merri Creek Management Committee could build up its contact with schools and Youth Workers to develop joint programs for involving youth in park activities. Youth could be involved in small scale, localised plans such as exists in the Morialta National Park (South Australia) - students prepare and submit their own proposals with the assistance of a park planner. In this way students would need to make considerations of which area ought/ought not to be set aside for nature, recommending where paths are to go etc.

* Youths could organise walks and conduct interpreted tours for community groups or Primary School groups. This would fit in well with study requirements for the communication component of several VCE subjects.

* Expanding the photo documentation project conducted by PLACE.

* The Merri Creek Management Committee could set up a "junior MCMC" to make recommendations to, and be represented on Management Committee. This is difficult for the whole of the Merri, but it may be considered on a small scale for key parks.

Formal sports facilities

The creation of more formal sports facilities has been found to be highly unfavourable along the Creek, but this contrasts with the high value a number of people give to the facilities that already exist. To overcome potential conflict that may arise, liaison needs to be established between groups that use the sports facilities and the Merri Creek Management Committee. The results of the community consultation and future plans of Merri Creek Management Committee need to be clarified to these groups. At the same time, the existing needs of the sports ground users need to be understood. With the establishment of stronger relationships, the sports ground users could take a more active role on priority programs along the Creek.

Further consultations

More detailed consultations are necessary for specific developments along the Creek. One aspect needing prompt attention is the velodrome. This consultation lends itself well to being conducted by school students.

Community involvement and education

The above recommendations demand much contact with the community and schools and involves the setting up of programs. This could only happen effectively through the employment of a community involvement/education officer. The programs developed by such an officer would assist to make the efforts of the Merri Creek Management Committee go much further.

Paths, bikes and walking.

Trail bikes were identified as a major problem on the Creek and not wanted by everyone except for the few that ride them. Trail bike riders like being in natural bushland areas and did not see the conflict of interest. An education program through schools would be effective for dealing with this matter followed by controls.

Most of the community liked walking along the Creek and enjoyed well managed tracks or paths. Bicycles received some opposition when cyclists were riding too fast in unsafe stretches. Strong recommendations did not come from the community, and the complexity of planning paths does not lend itself to detailed consultation at early stages. It would be best for land managers to draw up proposals taking into consideration results of the different consultants reports. These plans would then be appropriate for obtaining community comments.

The broader perspective

Several environmental programs developed for reaching the ethnic communities have failed since they were not involving the community in their local area. Also, difficulties exist with ethnic communities understanding regulations about nature preservation and other environmental matters. Environment programs conducted by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or Melbourne Water would be most effective in reaching the ethnic communities if conducted along the Merri Creek rather than being conducted at infrequently visited sites.

3. Methodology

3.1 Schools and ethnic communities

To gain a broad representation of the different groups found along the Creek, six schools and eleven ethnic community groups were consulted in the municipalities from Collingwood to Whittlesea. Half the schools were Primary and the other half Secondary. For selecting ethnic groups, we ensured to consult groups that are most abundant along the Merri as well as a selection of smaller groups.

The basis of our consultation was the questionnaire which was only produced in English. Having the questionnaire translated into several languages and then translating the responses back into English was not a possibility as the necessary budget would have been many times more what was available. It was far more effective and we gained broad ethnic representation by utilising the existing networks.

The questionnaire was designed with the primary principles in mind:

- it should be in simple language so that it could be translated by students when they interview their parents/grandparents or friends.
- the questionnaire could be completed within the time allocated for a class session, with time available for an introduction and follow-up discussion.

To consult the school groups time was made in class sessions. These usually took 50 minutes and consisted of an introduction to the Concept Plan, viewing of slides, answering the questionnaire and follow-up discussion.

Reaching adults of NESB required a variety of methods. These included:

- sending questionnaires home with students and the students interviewing their parents or friends.
- On site consultations with the Democritus and Greek Women's (Preston) group. The consultations were incorporated into picnics and a bike ride the groups had organised along the Creek.
- Visiting groups at their meeting place (Italian and Greek Northcote groups, the two Adult Migrant Learning Centres). Usually the questionnaire formed a basis for discussion and small groups were interviewed at one time. Individual students filled in the questionnaire at the Adult Learning Centres and was a very successful means of receiving input.
- The questionnaire was taken by the Hmong, Cambodian, Russian Orthodox and Islamic community workers and interpreted to their groups. The leaders preferred to do this on their own, as part of their group activities rather than have somebody unknown present the matter to the group. Some questionnaires were left at Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House and the Merri Child Care Centre for children to take home to their parents.
- One interview was conducted on Hellenic Radio (a Greek Radio Station) regarding the Merri Creek Concept Plan and this was followed by talk back.

Schools contacted

Lakeside High School
Fawkner East Primary School
Newlands High School
Northcote High School
Merri Primary School
Spensley St. Primary School

Ethnic community groups contacted

Democritus (Greek Association)
Italian elderly group (west Northcote)
Northcote elderly Greek community
Aboriginal Advancement League
Allawi Islamic Association
Turkish Group, Coburg
Macedonian community, Preston
Greek Womens's Group, Preston.
Collingwood Adult Migrant Women's Learning Centre (Multicultural)
Brunswick Adult Migrant Learning Centre
Cambodian group (via Jika Jika Community Centre)
Hmong community
Russian Orthodox: Brunswick
Merri Child Care Centre
Hellenic Radio (Northcote)

Profile of people consulted

Ethnic grouping	Respondents to questionnaires (out of 417)
Anglo - Celtic	234
Southern European	66
Middle East	35
African	8
Central and East European	16
Asian and Pacific	61

Ethnic grouping	Language
Anglo - Celtic	English
South European	Greek Italian Maltese Albanian
Middle East	Turkish Arabic
Asian and Pacific	Chinese/Mandarin Hmong Vietnamese Cambodian Nepali Hindi Thai PNG language Samoan language
Central & East European	Macedonian Croatian Serbian Polish Bulgarian Romanian

(cont)

Ethnic grouping	Language
African	Portuguese Ethiopian Somali

The Koori community was consulted through the Aborigines Advancement League. Their most preferred option for being consulted was to liaise with one representative. The responses were mainly through discussion. Because this was the most preferred option rather than utilising questionnaires the Koori community is not represented in the standard analysis, but the responses are provided in a special section.

417 questionnaires were processed. For school respondents and the Adult Migrant Learning Centres, these represent individual responses. In the case of most ethnic community groups the consultation was through discussion based on the questionnaire. As such, one questionnaire represents the views of the community group or a group of about eight members of the group. Analysis of the consultation is mostly based on the questionnaires. With few exceptions the responses derived from the questionnaires match the responses from group discussions. The differences have been clarified where they occur.

The questionnaire consists of a mixture of open ended questions and tick the box questions. The answers to the open ended questions were coded to enable statistical processing. The survey forms were processed by Oz Info Pty Ltd on the Microtab package. Oz Info holds the processed data and it is available for further analysis if required.

3.2 Community and special interest groups

In order to hear the views of a different cross-section of the community, a questionnaire survey was undertaken of local community groups and organised user groups relating to the Creeks.

A mailing list was compiled from records held by seven Councils along the Creeks, with the following categories:

	Sent	Returned
. residents', traders' and tenants' associations	31	1
. sporting clubs that use grounds adjoining Creeks	38	4
. community groups, including historical societies, youth, senior citizens and bicycle groups	<u>33</u>	<u>8</u>
	102	13

A questionnaire and covering letter were sent to the Secretary of each group (see Appendix 2). Some of the questions were similar to questions in the schools/non-English speaking background questionnaire. Others were aimed at the uses made of the Parklands by organised groups, and their future requirements.

The thirteen responses received (13% response rate) were analysed individually and the results are reported in Section 5, below. These responses are not included in the tabulated data.

3.3 Local residents

The Community Consultation project team prepared a flyer announcing and outlining the Concept Plan process, and inviting participation. This was mailed to 3,250 households within 0.5 km of the Merri Creek, together with a questionnaire commissioned by Melbourne Water as part of a Customer Research project. The findings of this survey of local residents are reported in *Merri Creek Concept Plan Customer Research: Survey of Local Residents* (Jan Bruce & Assoc. 1993).

4. Evaluation of survey techniques

The questionnaire was a very effective means for consulting groups that met on a formal basis with structured activities, such as school groups and Adult Migrant Learning Centres. It also offered the benefit that group leaders, students or other individuals were able to take copies away and use them to consult other people in their community.

The questionnaires were not useful for the NESB elderly groups or individuals not familiar with filling in structured forms, though it formed a basis for group discussion. With the two elderly groups, the President was contacted and asked if we could meet the group to “ask them what their ideas are about developing Merri Creek”. As a result we were informally met, and had mixed success in receiving input from the members. Greater success would have been achieved if the President was requested if we could “give a talk to the group about Merri Creek and discuss ideas about it’s development”. In this way time would have been set aside for a comprehensive discussion. As it was, we sat in with small groups and went through the questionnaire as a group contribution.

Greater benefit would have been gained by having open ended and guided discussion. This creates difficulties for using the information for statistical analysis. However, it enables consultants to become more aware of the needs and wants of the community, the strength of their ideas and identify potential areas of misunderstanding.

On average, 55 student responses were received per school. On the whole, consulting students was very successful. Detailed discussions were possible, students and teachers felt a strong commitment about their contributions and the schools were interested in how the Concept Plan could relate to their programs. Two main disadvantages were:

- 1) The timing of conducting the consultation meant that students were consulted just as they were breaking up. This enabled ready access to classes, though the momentum of taking things home and returning them had waned. This meant that we did not achieve one of our objectives of receiving more responses from parents. Also, it was not possible to fit the consultation in with Brunswick East Primary School before the break up.
- 2) The consultation with Newlands High School was to take place two days after the school found out they were to close down. The student's response after the introduction was one of outrage: “What does it matter what we think, they just go and do what they want anyway”.

Of the 417 questionnaire respondents, only 8 were of African background. This is not a statistically valid sample and therefore we cannot say that these responses reflect the views of the African community. Also, only four of the responses to the questionnaire were aged over 61. Most of the people in the over 61 age group were consulted in groups. In most aspects, the views of the elderly were similar to the trends shown amongst the general community. The differences that do occur are highlighted in a special section.

The relatively low response rate (13%) received to the community and special interest group survey can be partly explained by:

- . The timing - the questionnaire was mailed out in late December, for return in January. Many organisations do not meet over this period.
- . The lack of follow-up - a reminder note could have elicited more responses.
- . Although every effort was made to compile an up-to-date and relevant mailing list, some groups are probably no longer active, or have no interest in the study area.

5. Findings of the consultation

5.1 Frequency of park usage

From the graphs (Figs. 1-4), it can be seen that the respondents use the Merri Creek more than other - local or not local, parks. Therefore it is an important natural resource for escaping the urban environment, relaxing, socialising and coming into contact with nature. It's importance is especially pronounced since the opportunities for residents to easily visit alternative parks are very few, especially in the middle and lower reaches of the survey area.

This is a very important factor for the two main groups targetted in this consultation: school children and people of non-English speaking background. For these people the Merri offers the only real opportunity to learn about Australia's ecosystems.

Please note that the samples for Coburg and Whittlesea are small and very likely do not offer an accurate representation of visitor use of parks.

5.2 What are the three most important things you enjoy about visiting a park?

<u>(In order of priority)</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Play equipment/sports facilities	34
Trees/climbing trees/Vegetation/bush	33
Fresh air	24
Views/sights/surroundings/wide open spaces	22
Socialising/having fun/playing/entertainment	21
Relaxing/being peaceful/sunbaking/privacy	18
Animal & bird life	18
Picnic/BBQ/Picnic shelter	14
Walking	12
Cleanliness/clean facilities/toilets/bins	12
Gardens/flowers	8
Looking at/playing:Water/Creek/Lake/Waterfall/	7
Bike riding/bike tracks/tracks	6
Shade/shelter	3
Fishing	1
Walking dog	1
Escaping urban environment	1
Seats	1
Canoeing	1
Being somewhere safe	<1
Horseriding	<1
Rocks	<1
Excercising	<1

This table does not give a picture of what people feel the overall appearance of the Creek ought to be. Rather it indicates features which are special to people.

The responses from community groups indicated a broadly similar set of preferences, although play equipment and sports facilities were not mentioned. Trees and a natural setting were most important. Seats, paths and good accessibility were important, especially to older people.

Frequency of Park Visits by Age

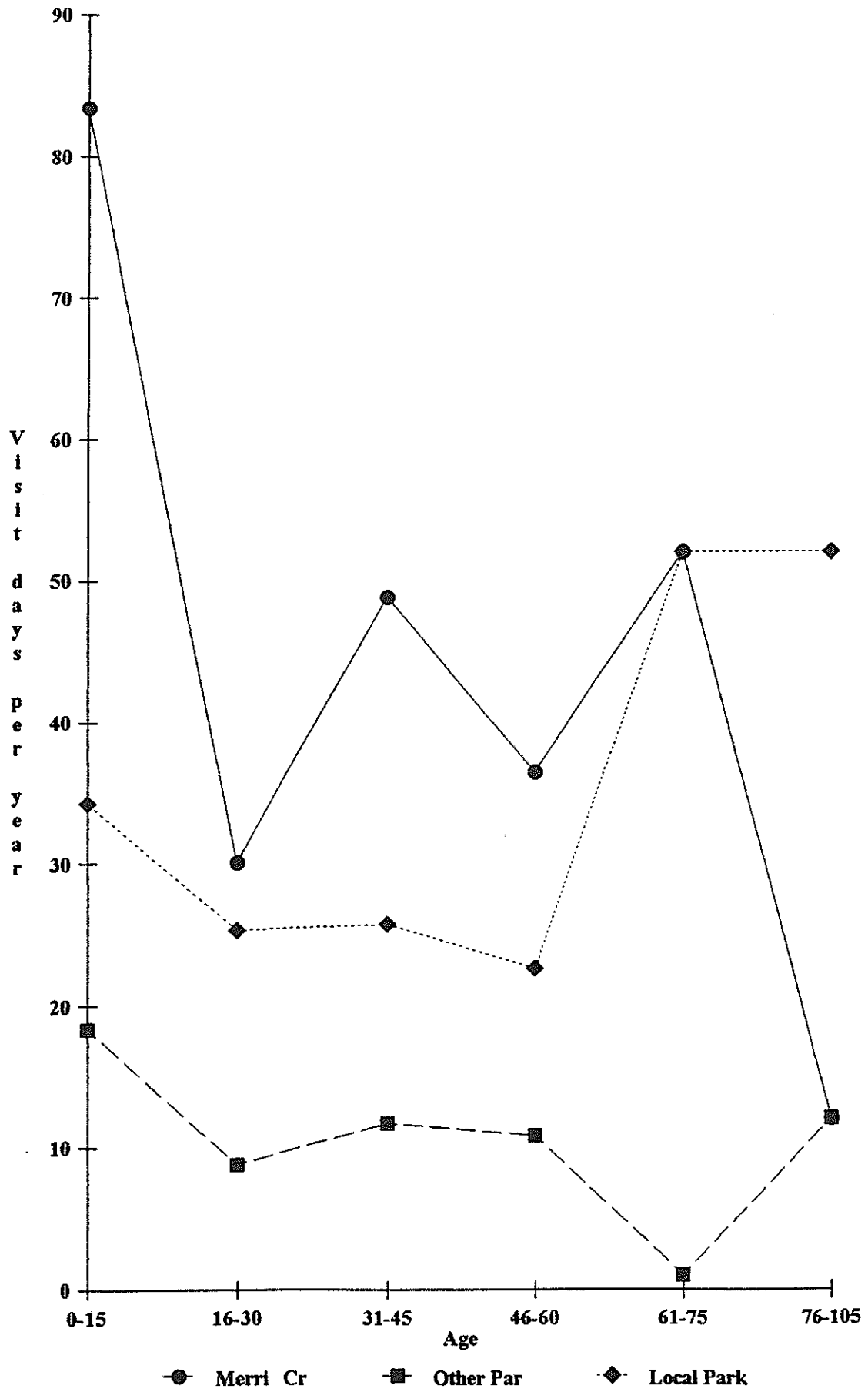


Fig. 1

Park visits by ethnicity

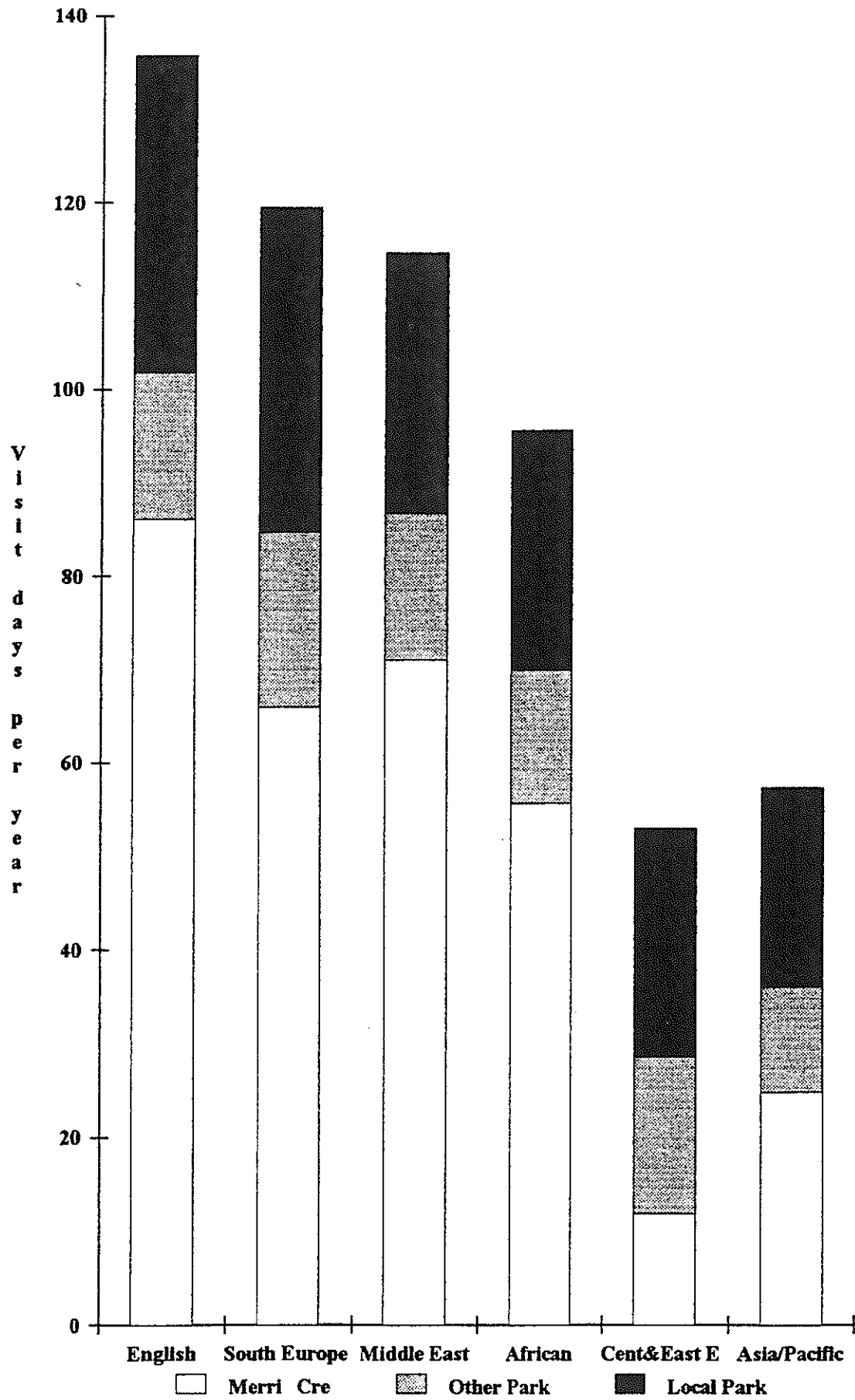


Fig. 2

Frequency of park visits by gender

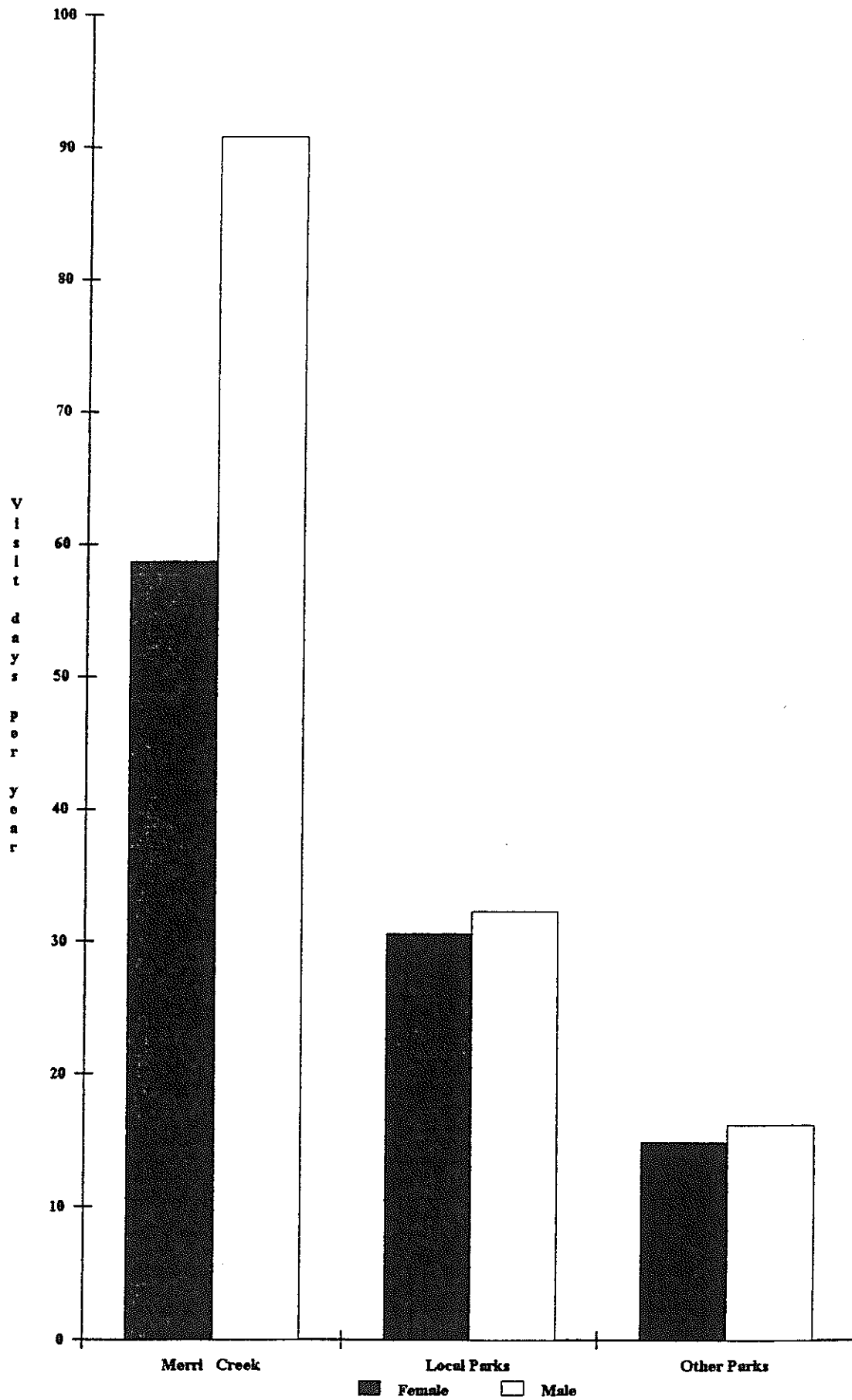


Fig. 3

Frequency of park visits by Municipality

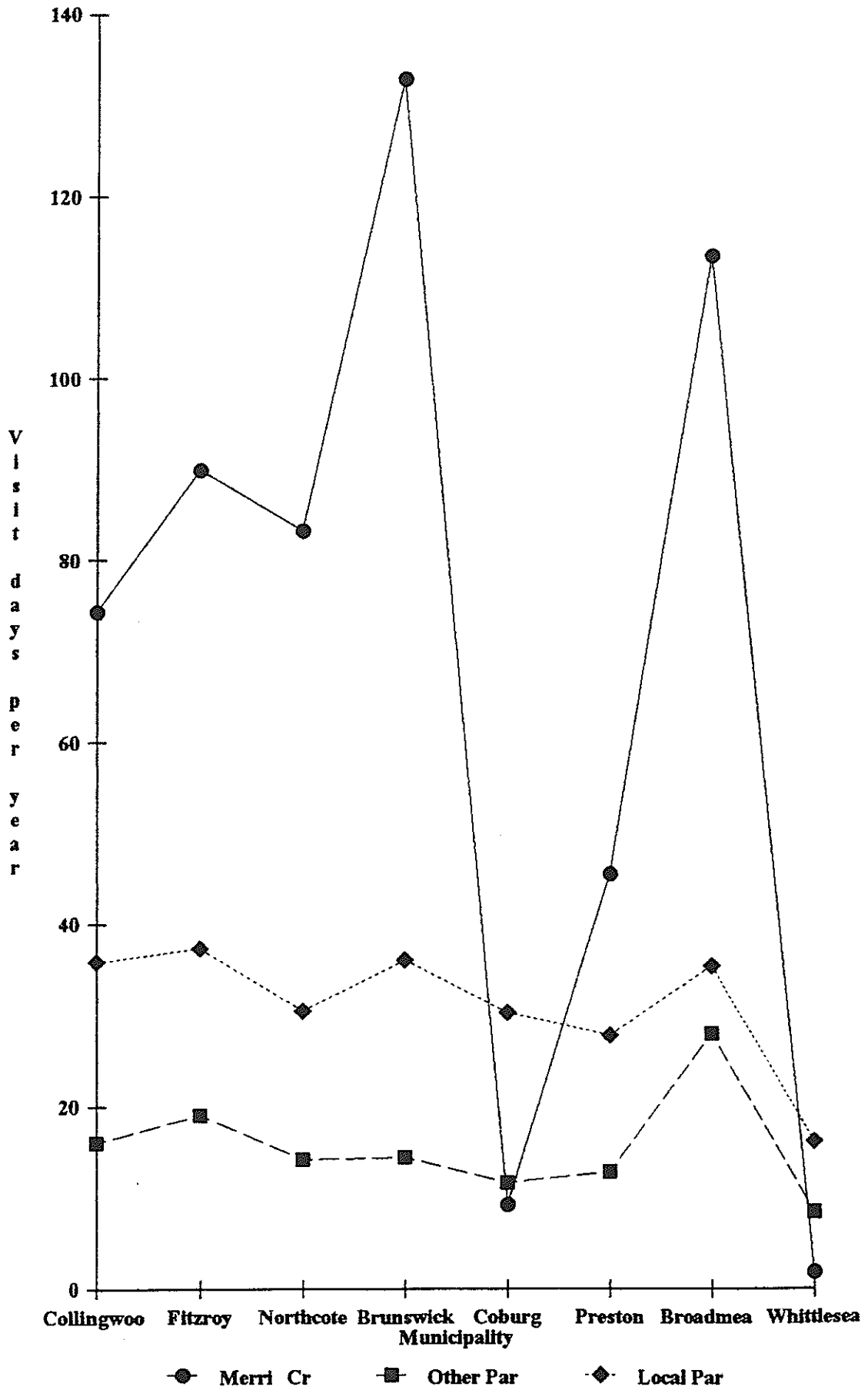


Fig 4

5.3 Ideal appearance of Merri Creek parklands in 20 year's time

<u>(In order of priority)</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Cleaner	42
More vegetation (native)	34
More wildlife	13
More play equipment	7
More/better BBQ & picnic facilities	7
Flowers	6
More or better tracks - pedestrian or bike	6
Same/as it is now	5
Opportunities for fishing	4
Opportunities for swimming	3
Areas for relaxation & quiet	3
"Good"	3
Chance to escape urban environment	2
Opportunities for socialising	2
More activities	2
Somewhere safe	1
More park benches/seats	1

From the responses, it appears that there were two main ways the question was interpreted: 1. What is it about a park that attracts you? and 2. What is it that a park might lack to make your visit not enjoyable?

For example, it seems strange that people might visit a park because it has clean facilities, but it appears to be that if places do not have clean facilities, it may deter people from visiting that place. The importance of clean facilities came out even more strongly in the groups that were consulted without the questionnaire. This was especially so with two Arabic Women's Groups. When they were asked what parks they liked visiting, and what was it about those parks they liked, the two most immediate responses were: the nice gardens and the clean facilities.

Of the two items that were highest priority, play equipment ranked very strongly in the under 15 age group. For each of the age groups over 16, trees were ranked as a higher priority, with the difference increasing as the age group increased. In the 46-60 age group 19% of the respondents mentioned play equipment as being important, and 44% mentioned trees as being important.

The NESB sample has a higher proportion of people over 15 than the English group. This means that the NESB responses are slightly biased towards adult preferences whereas the "English" sample is slightly biased towards youth preferences. In the NESB and English groups, trees rank slightly higher than play equipment except for the Middle East group. Play equipment ranked as very important for the Middle East group. Play equipment was also mentioned as important by young parents and grandparents - a factor which came out even stronger in the verbal consultation. It became evident that play equipment offered adults an opportunity to visit a park since their children had a safe area to be entertained for a length of time.

One request that came out very strongly was for seats and shade for adults to be available near children's playgrounds. It was explained that "very often the adults area was so distant from the childrens that parents didn't feel safe leaving their young children unattended" and "it gets very tiring standing around watching children when there are no seats for us.....I have to take my children away eventhough they want to keep playing".

It is also interesting to note that sports equipment was mentioned as an important aspect of why people choose to visit a park (No 2.), yet more sports facilities are not requested for the future of

Merri Creek. This implies two possibilities:

- 1) People are happy with what already exists but do not want an extension of formal sports facilities or
- 2) Sports facilities are important to some people but not wanted by others who would prefer to see sports facilities go. If this is the case, it could be an area of conflict and liaison with users is important.

Most of the community and interest group responses referred to more vegetation and/or a natural appearance. The second most popular request was for more paths. (An athletic club would like dirt or grassed surfaces rather than concrete or bitumen for training runs.) Barbeque or picnic facilities, and toilets were requested by several groups. Cleanliness or tidiness was a priority in five responses.

5.4 How do you spend your time at Merri Creek?

<u>(In order of priority)</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Walking	38
Bike riding	17
Having fun/informal games	16
Relaxing	10
Exploring/observing nature	9
Socialising	7
Picnic/BBQ	6
Walking the dog	5
Fishing	3
Jogging/exercising	4
Looking at/playing with rocks	2
Water: playing/swimming	2
Sports-formal/soccer	2
Horseriding	1
Wagging	1
Reading books	1
Boating/canoeing	1
Motor bike	<1
Making cubby houses	<1

Seven of the community and special interest groups surveyed use open space along the Merri Creek as a group. The reported activities were:

- Training runs
- Competition cricket (2 sites)
- Competition football and training
- Tennis
- Educational activities, especially water monitoring
(20-100 students, twice/week from CERES)
- Tree planting
- Organised walks
- Picnics, barbecues
- Weeding, litter clean ups

5.5 What part of the Merri Creek do you mostly visit?

On average, people visited a length of 4.1km around their home. This length was less for the under 15 and over 60 age groups, and was longest for the 31-45 age group.

The Whittlesea, Coburg and Preston respondents travelled the greatest distances, and Collingwood respondents the least. However this might be biased since the Collingwood respondents were mostly under 15's.

There is only a slight variation amongst the ethnic groups as to how much of the Creek they visit. With the average distance being 4.1km, the distances for the Central and Eastern European groups and the Asia Pacific groups were slightly further (4.8km and 6.3km respectively). The distances were slightly shorter for the Middle East groups and the Southern European groups (2.3km and 3.1km respectively).

5.6 What are the main reasons stopping you visiting the Creek more often?

	<u>Percentage</u>
Not enough time	17
Danger (snakes/flashers),not allowed	11
Pollution	10
Lack of facilities/poor walking tracks	6
Don't know where the park is	4
Long grass/mosquitoes/flyes/weeds	3
Boring	3
Unattractive/too much rubbish	3
Weather unsuitable	2
Lack of transport	1
Not enough social contacts	1

* This pattern of responses was very similar to the pattern of responses received in the discussion group consultations.

* As can be seen there was a significant amount of fear of what might be found near the Creek. In some cases it was clear that there were direct unpleasant experiences. However, it did appear that some people mostly had an image that the Creek was unsafe due to rumour. These rumours were very strongly felt and seemed to propagate very easily.

On the design of toilets

The lack of facilities (mainly toilets and drinking fountains) came up in the questionnaire and probably even more strongly in the discussion groups as being a reason for not visiting the Creek. Yet, another apparent contradiction is that people felt that toilets made a park unsafe as it attracted "undesirables". It seems that a community dilemma exists in that toilets are strongly wanted yet also unwanted.

If toilets were designed to be "safe" they would service visitors and not create fear amongst others. Toilets were described (mainly by women) as being unsafe because it was not possible to know who was around the corner. This was mainly due to the toilet block having two toilets and a foyer area - "there could be someone hiding in the toilet and they could come out while you are in the other one".

5.7 What features would you like along the Creek?

<u>In order of priority</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
More trees & bushland areas	85
Picnic areas	85
More areas set aside for nature	84
Quiet areas	83
Better access to toilets	83
Better/more playgrounds	82
More walking paths	81
Drinking fountains	81
More seats	80
Barbeques	80
Picnic Shelters	79

Lighting	72
More cycle paths	68
More education/nature activities	68
Linking of bike paths	67
Areas for informal sport	64
Fishing	63
More or better information	63
Somewhere for social groups to gather	60
Horseriding	59
Somewhere to hire bikes	58
Kiosks	58
Dog walking	57
Areas for BMX/trail bikes	50
Community Veg Gardens	49
Formal sports activities	46

Community and special interest groups were asked what facilities would assist their group's use of the Merri Creek Parklands. Paths, barbeques, informative signs and toilet facilities were requested by several groups. Facilities not listed above, but nominated by a group were: amphitheatre, boating, car parking, fencing of creek to stop footballs.

5.8 Features you would not like along the Creek.

<u>In order of priority</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Formal sports facilities	41
Community veg gardens	40
Areas for BMX/trail bikes	39
Dog walking	33
Kiosks	31
Horseriding	31
Somewhere to hire bikes	29
Fishing	28
Somewhere for social groups to gather	28
Areas for informal sport	26
More or better information	24
More education/nature activities	22
Linking of bike paths	21
More cycle paths	20
Lighting	18
More walking paths	13
Drinking fountains	13
Picnic shelters	12
Barbeques	12
More seats	12
Better or more playgrounds	11
More trees & bushland	10
Better access to toilets	10
Quiet areas	9
Picnic areas	7
More areas set aside for nature	7

One of the greatest misinterpretations that arose from the consultation was the response to community vegetable gardens. There appears to be a significant number of people giving a negative response. This was clear after the first school group (Lakeside High School) was consulted. To investigate why there was such a response, the issue was raised in the discussion with other groups. Surprisingly, it was not that the respondents did not like community vegetable gardens, rather they felt that it would be sad if members of the community went to the trouble of establishing the gardens and other people would go and destroy them.

The low ranking of community vegetable gardens is also affected by the bias of more under 15's being respondents to the questionnaire. The ranking was also a strong contrast to the responses received through group discussions. With some groups the verbal request for what they strongly wanted was a community vegetable garden. The popularity of community gardens can also be seen through their popularity at Collingwood Children's Farm and at CERES where there are lengthy waiting lists. One of the greatest dilemmas is that the strongest desires for community vegetable gardens is in the lower reaches of the Merri where space is limited.

Another response that may not accurately reflect community views is the response to "fishing". Some people interpreted the question as being "Would you like to have fishing in the Creek the way it is now?" whereas other people interpreted the question to mean "Would you like to have fishing in the Creek in the future?". Since the question was intended to give an indication of a vision for the future, it seems that less people stated they would like fishing than what is the actual case.

For all the features in the list, there is an almost perfect inverse relationship between the order of what is most wanted and what is most not wanted. However there are slight inconsistencies with two features: more trees and bushland areas, and more walking paths.

For these two, there was a higher proportion of people saying they did not want the features than what would have been expected if there was a true inverse relationship. It seems that if MCMC adopted the community recommendations for what is most wanted (trees, bushland and walking paths are in the high priority section) there may be objections from a number of people. These two aspects need to be taken to the community for consultation whenever changes are to be made.

5.9 FEATURES WOULD LIKE: Differences between female and male preferences.

FEATURES GIVEN A HIGHER PREFERENCE BY FEMALES THAN MALES

Feature	Percentage difference
Picnic areas	6
Seats	6
Dog walking	5
Educ/nature acts.	5
Quiet areas	3
Better access to toilets	3
Drinking fountains	3
Comm veg gardens	2
BBQ	2
Picnic shelters	2

FEATURES GIVEN A HIGHER PREFERENCE BY MALES THAN FEMALES

Feature	Percentage difference
BMX/trail bike	25
Bike hire	18
Areas-formal sport	17
Areas-informal sport	9
Kiosks	9
Areas set aside-nature	6
Trees & bushland	6
Linking bike paths	6
Cycle paths	4
Fishing	4
More/better information	4
Lighting	3
Somewhere..soc groups	2

Features that had no difference or a difference of 1%

Walking paths
playgrounds
horseriding

FEATURES WOULD NOT LIKE ALONG THE CREEK - Differences between females and males

Features not wanted by females more than they are not wanted by males.

Feature	percentage difference
Areas for BMX/trail bikes	19
Areas for formal sport	16
Hire bikes	12
Kiosks	7
Areas for informal sport	4
More trees & bush	3

No difference

Fishing
Community vegetable gardens
More areas set aside for nature
More or better information
Lighting
Horseriding

Features not wanted by males more than they are not wanted by females

Feature	percentage difference
Educn & nature activities	9
picnic areas	8
better access-toilets	7
Drinking fountains	7
dog walking	6
seats	6
More walking paths	6
picnic shelters	5
Quiet areas	5
More cycle paths	4
BBQ's	4
Areas - social groups	4
Children's playgrounds	2
Linking of bike paths	2

5.10 FEATURES WOULD LIKE ALONG THE CREEK - by ethnicity

Key: AV=Average

AF=African

ENG= English

C/E.EUR=Central & Eastern European

S.E.= Southern European

AS/PAC= Asian/Pacific

FEATURE	AV	ENG	S.E	ME	AF	C/E.EUR	AS/PAC
More trees/bush	85	+5	+1	-5	-10	+15	-23
Picnic areas	85	-6	+10	+6	+15	+3	+5
More areas..nature	84	-	+2	-7	+4	-3	+3
Quiet areas	83	-	+9	-	-8	+5	-6
More/access toilet	83	-4	+6	+14	+5	-8	+2
Better..playground	82	-4	+4	+12	+18	-1	+6
More walk paths	81	-7	+5	+5	+19	+13	+11
Drinking fountains	81	+2	+13	+10	+19	+7	-33
Barbeques	80	-4	+9	+6	-17	-11	+5
More seats	80	-6	+11	+6	+8	+1	+5
Picnic shelters	79	-7	+10	+12	+9	-4	+8
Lighting	72	-8	+5	+22	+28	+3	+10
More cycle paths	68	+2	+2	+3	+20	+1	-14
Education/nat acts	68	-5	-	+1	-43	+13	+16
Linking of bike p	67	+2	+3	+4	-17	-4	-8
Areas-informal spo	64	-5	+13	+19	-14	-1	-5
Fishing	63	-4	+10	+20	-	+18	-12
More/better info	63	-10	+5	+11	-25	+18	+24
Somewhere..social	60	-8	+11	+17	-10	-4	+10
Horseriding	59	+8	+5	-2	+29	+4	-38
Somewhere...bikes	58	-4	+13	+11	+17	+5	-9
Kiosks	58	-9	+7	+22	+5	-8	+14
Dog walking	57	+7	+11	+7	+7	+7	-44
Areas.BMX/trail	50	+1	+3	+7	+25	+6	-20
Comm veg gardens	49	-4	+12	+11	-24	+32	-10
Formal sport facil	46	-4	+9	+8	+17	+10	-2

FEATURES WOULD LIKE ALONG THE CREEK - in order of priority for the different cultural groups

Southern European Group

Picnic areas	95
Drinking fountains	94
Quiet areas	92
More seats	91
Picnic shelters	89
Barbeques	89
Access toilets	89
More trees bush	86
More walking paths	86
More areas...nature	86
Better/more playgrounds	86
Areas for informal	77
Lighting	77
Fishing	73
Somewhere....social	71
Somewhere....bikes	71
More cycle paths	70
Linking bike paths	70
Education/nature	68
More/better info	68
Dog walking	68
Kiosks	65
Horseriding	64
Comm. veg gardens	61
Formal sports act	55
BMX/Trail bikes	53

Middle-East Group

Better access toilets	97
More/better playgrounds	94
Lighting	94
Picnic areas	91
Picnic shelters	91
Drinking fountains	91
More walking paths	86
Barbeques	86
Seats	86
Fishing	83
Areas..informal sp	83
Quiet areas	83
More trees bush	80
Kiosks	80
More areas..nature	77
Somewhere..social	77
More/better info	74
More cycle paths	71
Linking bike paths	71
Educat/nature acts	69
Hire bikes	69
Dog walking	63
Comm veg gardens	60
BMX/Trail bikes	57
Horseriding	57
Formal sport	54

English speaking group

More trees/bush	90
More areas set..nature	84
Quiet areas	83
Drinking fountains	83
Picnic areas	79
Better access toilets	79
More/better playgrounds	78
Barbeques	76
More walking paths	74
More seats	74
Picnic shelters	72
More cycle paths	70
Linking of bike paths	69
Horseriding	67
Lighting	64
Dog walking	64
Educ/nature activities	63
Fishing	59
Areas...informal sport	59
Somewhere..hire bikes	54
More/better informatn	53
Somewhere...social gps	52
BMX/Trail bikes	51
Kiosks	49
Comm veg gardens	45
Formal sport	42

African group

More walking paths	100
Better/more playground	100
Picnic areas	100
Lighting	100
Drinking fountains	100
More cycle paths	88
Picnic shelters	88
More seats	88
More areas....nature	88
Better access toilets	88
Horseriding	88
More trees/bush	75
Quiet areas	75
Hire bikes	75
BMX/Trail bikes	75
Fishing	63
Barbeques	63
Kiosks	63
Formal sport...	63
Dog walking	63
Linking of bike paths	50
Areas ..informal sport	50
Somewhere..social gps	50
Comm veg gardens	25
More/better infor	38
Educ/nature activities	25

FEATURES YOU WOULD LIKE ALONG THE CREEK (cont.)

Asian/Pacific group

More walking paths	92
Picnic areas	90
More or better playgrounds	87
Picnic shelters	87
More areas....nature	87
More/better info	87
BBQ's	85
More seats	85
Better access toilets	85
Education/nature acts	84
Lighting	82
Quiet areas	77
Kiosks	72
Somewhere...social	70
More trees/bush	62
Linking bike paths	59
Areas..informal sport	59
More cycle paths	54
Fishing	51
Hire bikes	49
Drinking fountains	48
Formal sport	44
Comm veg gardens	39
BMX/Trail	30
Horseriding	21
Dog walking	13

Central and Eastern Europe group

More trees/bush	100
More walking paths	94
Picnic areas	88
Quiet areas	88
Drinking fountains	88
More.....nature	81
More seats	81
Education/nature acts	81
Fishing	81
Comm veg gardens	81
More/better playground	81
More/better info	81
Picnic shelters	75
Better access toilets	75
Lighting	75
More cycle paths	69
BBQ's	69
Linking of bike paths	63
Areas.. informal sport	63
Hire bikes	63
Dog walking	63
Horseriding	63
Somewhere...social gps	56
Formal sport	56
BMX/Trail bikes	56
Kiosks	50

5.11 MOST UNWANTED FEATURES (by percentage)

AVERAGE

Formal sport fac	41
Comm veg gardens	40
BMX/trail bikes	39
Dog walking	33
Horseriding	31

SOUTH EUROPEAN

Formal sports fac	38
BMX/Trail bikes	35
Comm veg gardens	29
Horseriding	27
Kiosks	26
Dog walking	26

AFRICAN

Comm veg gardens	63
Educn/nature acts	63
Linking bike paths	50
Somewhere...social	50
More/better info	50

ASIAN/PACIFIC

Dog walking	79
Horseriding	70
BMX/Trail bikes	62
Comm veg gardens	54
Drinking fountains	49
Formal sport fac	46
Fishing	46

ENGLISH SPEAKING GROUP

Formal sports fac	43
Comm veg gardens	42
Kiosks	37
BMX/Trail bikes	36
Somewhere...social	33

MIDDLE EAST

Formal sports fac	34
Horseriding	31
BMK/Trail	29
Comm veg gardens	29
Educn/nature	26
Dog walking	26

CENTRAL/EAST EUROPEAN

Kiosks	44
Formal sports fac	38
Somewhere...social	38
BMX/Trail	38
BBQ	31
Link bike paths	31
Areas informal sp	31
Hire bikes	31
Dog walking	31
Horseriding	31

Through the tables, it can be seen that the trend for the features that are most wanted and most unwanted are fairly similar for most groups. Most groups wanted the Merri Creek to be a refuge, away from urbanisation, vegetated and with minimal structures. The notable differences are:

- a higher rating by all NESB groups for picnic facilities (mostly picnic areas and to a lesser extent, barbecues)
- a higher rating for clean facilities, children's playgrounds and drinking taps by the Middle East groups.
- a higher rating for the provision of information by the Asian & Pacific groups.

5.12 WHAT FEATURES OF THE MERRI CREEK DO YOU ENJOY?

In order of priority	Percentage
Trees	22
Nature/animals/birds	19
Water	17
Bike paths	7
Equipment/playground	6
Park/clean park	6
Surroundings/fresh air	3
Privacy/isolation	3
Rocks	3
Quietness	2
Running water	2
Activities	2
Environment	2
Paths	2
Bridge	2
Island	2
Exercising	2
Safety	1
Horses	1
Socialising	1
Sunbaking	1
Views/scenes	1
Grassland	1
Walking	1
Everything	1
BBQ's	<1
Picnic facilities	<1
Clean	<1
Sports ground	<1
Swimming	<1

5.13 WHAT FEATURES OF MERRI CREEK NEED IMPROVING?

(In order of priority)	Percentage
Water quality	27
Vegetation/trees	23
Litter problem	22
Rubbish dumping/car bodies	16
Pollution	10
Everything	8
Walking tracks	6
Bike tracks	5
Nature	4
Park & garden furniture	4
Weeds	2

Safety	2
Activities	2
Socialising opportunities	1
Bins	1
Playgrounds	1
Lighting	1
Toilets	1
More parks	1
Swimming	1
Erosion	1
Bridges	1
Isolation	<1
Fishing	<1
Better maintenance	<1
Dogs	<1
Restoration	<1
Community Veg gardens	<1
Industry	<1
Accessibility	<1
Picnic areas	<1

Community groups were asked to nominate the most important issues existing with the Merri Creek at present. The main concerns were the same as listed above: pollution/litter/rubbish, and the need for more vegetation. Better maintenance was sought by three groups.

5.14 Teenagers

The requests, likes and dislikes expressed by teenagers on the whole fell into a similar pattern to those expressed by the general community. Several features that stood out were that youths had a higher preference for trees, bushland, horseriding and more bicycle opportunities (paths, linking of paths, area for BMX/trail bike). Generally, youths like what everyone else likes, but several features they have expressed as likes are also the features that other age groups express as dislikes - this is especially the case for the more active features.

There also appears to be a perception amongst the community that teenagers are vandals, noisy and a threat to the constructive development of the Creek. It is very easy for teenagers to be excluded from park activities, but by being denied access and not utilising their excess energy the problem is compounded and the communities perceptions more ingrained.

Also, it is important to receive views from a cross section of youth. Usually, we receive youth perspectives from the ones whose actions are most noticeable: destructive, vandalism - the loud minority colours the image of all.

The results show that the youth have requested features that are not only inconsistent with the general community - but with their own requests. For example, the same youths that requested natural areas also chose trail bike areas and horseriding. For the youth to realise these inconsistencies they must have the opportunity to find that out for themselves.

The youth responded very well to being consulted - they took it seriously and showed great responsibility and concern. It seemed that when they were requested to be involved in a serious matter they responded maturely. Therefore, the more youth can be involved in the development and implementation of Merri Creek plans, the greater will be the benefits for the youth and the general community.

5.15 Consultation with the Aborigines Advancement League

The Kooris were very supportive of the direction already adopted by the Merri Creek Management Committee. They felt very strongly about the Merri being returned as much as possible to its natural state. In this way their preferences were very similar to the overall findings of this consultation.

The Kooris made use of the Merri for activities with their children to reconnect with the land. They were also pleased to extend these activities to other children and heighten awareness of the Koori connection with the land and especially the Merri.

Since they were supportive of the direction adopted by MCMC, they preferred not to make further comments about other aspects, but expressed that ongoing liaison between the Kooris and MCMC would be very desirable.

5.16 Consultation with Democritus Youth Group and velodrome.

A different method to consulting most youth was used for this group. A bike ride was organised on a week-end and key questions were used for discussion rather than the questionnaire. The responses of what was liked and disliked fell into a similar pattern to the overall responses to the survey. The major difference that arose was the groups response to the velodrome.

The velodrome did not rate a mention in most questionnaires but it was the topic of greatest interest amongst this group. I feel that the velodrome did not come up in the questionnaire because most people do not know about it and many have forgotten it. However, it was the only spot where the kids got off their bikes, questioned be about it, wanted to use it and complained about it not being available for use. (Normally the kids got annoyed with me if I took stops to ask them questions or show them interesting features about the Creek).

All the kids felt that it should be repaired and that it would be an excellent resource for youth. When I told them it had declined in popularity they “explained to me that it was because there is not a decent kiosk attached. They felt that it would be a “great pity if it were to be removed” and that it “should be repaired”.

The request for more activites was brought up in the question “How would you like the Merri Creek to look like in 20 years’ time?”. The velodrome would be an excellent opportunity for enabling youth to constructively use up some of their “excess” energy. It would also be a potential feature to meet two other requests made by youth: more BMX (or bike) tracks and some teenagers requested more opportunities for socialising.

The Creek is visited less frequently by the teens and twenties group:

Age group	Number of days per year that Creek is visited
<15	83.4
16-30	30.1
31-45	48.8
46-60	36.4
61-75	52.0
76+	(not statistically valid)

Some of the responses from teenagers implied that there was nothing for them to do. The velodrome might be a suitable attraction. It could also be combined with other facilites such as a youth community centre where programs could be conducted to involve youth in other programs

run by the Merri Creek Management Committee. The success or failure of the velodrome would very much depend on how it was run. (Please see section on Teenagers)

5.17 Other comments from community groups

The first question on the questionnaire to community and special interest groups sought their response to the development of the Merri Creek environment into an open space and bushland park (via the Concept Plan). All respondents supported this direction, many of them strongly, except for one sports club which expressed concern at the detriment to field sports.

The response from CERES in East Brunswick included a number of specific proposals for facilities that would complement both CERES and the Merri Creek.

An athletic club suggested that connections with nearby parklands would be valuable.

APPENDIX 1. Cross tabulated data as presented by Oz Info.

This section is available as a separate volume from Melbourne Water, Parks and Waterways.

How often do you visit any local park?

- About once a week
- About once a month
- About once a year

How often do you visit parks in other parts of Victoria?

- About once a week
- About once a month
- About once a year

What are the three most important things you enjoy about visiting a park?

How often do you visit the Merri Creek?

- Nearly every day
- About once a week
- About once a month
- About once a year
- Never

How would you like the Merri Creek parklands to look in 20 years' time?

A bit about yourself.

Approximate age (place a tick on the line)

0 15 30 45 60 75 90 105

Main languages that you speak.

Female Male

Suburb _____

Street _____

Thank you very much for your ideas and your time.

If you wish to find out more about the plan call

Rod McLellan
Manager
Merri Creek Management Committee
Ph: 479 4679

Please place a

**•tick (/) for the features you would like along the Creek or a •(x) for the features you would not like along the creek.
Please mark every box.**

- more walking paths;
- more cycle paths;
- fishing;
- community vegetable gardens;
- better or more playgrounds and childrens opportunities;
- more trees and bushland areas;
- barbecues;
- picnic areas;
- picnic shelters;
- kiosks;
- more seats;
- linking of bicycle paths;
- education/nature activities;
- more areas set aside for nature;
- areas for informal sport;
- quiet areas;
- formal sports facilities (please indicate which): _____ somewhere for social groups to get together;
- somewhere to hire bikes;
- more or better information;
- better access to toilets;
- lighting;
- drinking fountains;
- dog walking;
- areas for BMX and trail bikes;
- horse riding.

Merri Creek Management Committee Inc.

Comprising:

City of Collingwood
City of Coburg
Friends of Merri Creek

City of Fitzroy
City of Preston
Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

City of Northcote
City of Broadmeadows

City of Brunswick
City of Whittlesea
Melbourne Water



350 High St (PO Box 91) PRESTON 3072 ph:479 4679 FAX:471 0204

Dear Secretary,

Merri Creek Concept Plan

Context Pty Ltd, social and environmental planning consultants, have been appointed by Melbourne Water and the Merri Creek Management Committee to undertake community consultation for the Merri Creek Concept Plan.

We wish to invite your group to participate in the development of the Concept Plan. The Merri Creek is your Creek; your group's ideas and opinions about the Creek are important! Your participation can help make the Concept Plan your plan as well.

Attached is a simple questionnaire to help us find out what the community wants and values in terms of open space development and the future vision for the Merri Creek.

It would be appreciated if the questionnaire can be completed and returned in the enclosed reply-paid envelope by Monday, 18 January, 1993.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me on 380 6933.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. McGregor", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ann McGregor
Project Manager.

Merri Creek Concept Plan

At the moment, plans are being drawn up for ways in which a part of your neighbourhood, the Merri Creek, will be developed. The plan being made is a Concept Plan. A Concept Plan describes how an area can be planned and managed so that it best meets the needs of the community.

The Merri Creek and surrounding land is a special place. It can be used for recreation and leisure, as well as providing protection for nature and places of cultural importance. The Concept Plan aims to keep and enhance those things that make the Creek special.

Before these plans are put on paper the Merri Creek Management Committee wishes to consider the needs of the entire community - young and old, the cyclist, the conservationist, the playgroup, the athlete or the casual user.

What will be included in the study?

In preparing the Concept Plan many things like the flora, fauna, soils and heritage are being studied. How the Creek is currently used and the reasons why some people do not use the Creek are also being studied. Community ideas and opinions are being sought and included in the Plan.

A lot of work, in bits and pieces, along the Creek has already been done to make it into a parkland. It's time now to make sure that in the future the Creek will still be a special place and even better for everyone.

Some of the issues...

Already some issues are known, these include:

- **Pollution**- plastic bags in the water, drains discharging polluted water, old car bodies and rubbish dumped on vacant land beside the Creek.
- **Bush areas** - native grasslands, local plants and trees which are important conservation sites and should be protected. Where are they? What can be done to save and keep them?
- **Open space** - should it be used for quiet enjoyment, playgrounds for children, sports, picnic and other leisure activities, and/or nature conservation?
- **Houses, factories, schools and other buildings** - have been built right next to the Creek. In the future, how can these be made to complement the parkland of the Creek area?

If you want to know more...

- You can phone the Merri Creek Management Committee and talk to the Manager, Rod McLellan, on 479 4679. A speaker from the Committee could attend a meeting of your group.

We want your ideas!

Please write down your comments either on behalf of your group or as a group submission, tear off and send to Melbourne Water in the enclosed reply-paid envelope (no postage stamp is required).

1. *The preparation of a Concept Plan will guide the development of the Merri Creek environment into an open space and bushland park. What does your group feel about the nature of this change?*

2. *What are the most important issues which your group thinks exist with the Merri Creek at present?*

3. *What would be the three most important things about a park which your group appreciates?*

1.....

2.....

3.....

4. *Different groups use public places for many different purposes. Does your group use open space along the Merri Creek? (please tick appropriate box)*

No

Yes

5. *If your group does use open space along the Merri Creek, please write down the type of activity and how often it is undertaken.
For example: Competition football game every Saturday in winter.
Social group picnic twice a year.*
6. *Are there any facilities (e.g. paths, signs, barbecues, toilets, car parking, etc.) that would assist your group's use of the Merri Creek Parklands? Please write them down.*
7. *How would your group like the Merri Creek Parklands to look in 20 years time?*
8. *If you wish to make any other comments about the Merri Creek, please add them here.*

You *do not* need to write your name on this sheet but the following information would be helpful:

The name of your group

The suburbs your members mostly come from

The main interest of your group

