



Thomas Jack Park Precinct, Youth Engagement Process

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Version 1. June 2025



fourfold
STUDIO

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1.0 Context

In early 2025, landscape architects, Vee Design were appointed to further develop a Master Plan for the Thomas Jack Park Precinct. Following their appointment, they identified continued exploration of youth perspectives as a priority for this project, in line with the feedback continually heard from community that input from young voices and buy-in from younger generations will be critical for the success of the future Dalby Cultural Centre and Thomas Jack Park.

The development of the Thomas Jack Park Precinct Activation Strategy presented an opportunity to involve youth whilst also supporting the Thomas Jack Park Precinct Master Plan process. The Youth Engagement Program took place from 14th February 2025 to 16th May 2025 in support of these projects to ensure the needs and aspirations of local youth are reflected in the final design.



Who we Spoke to

To gain a broad range of sentiment and ideas more than 20 students from two local schools developed suggestions for design inclusions and activations:

- > Our Lady of the Southern Cross College (OLSCC), Dalby – 8 sessions, 14th February 2025 to 16th May 2025.
- > Dalby State High School (DSHS) – 2 sessions, 31st March 2025 to 7th April 2025.

What we did

The structure of the engagement program was designed to first give the students as much information about the project as possible and the role that they could play in informing the design. Following an introduction to the project and the concept of placemaking, the students were then briefed on the importance and purpose of incorporating Dalby's local identity into the design.

Once the students were fully informed about the project vision and design brief, we moved into the design phase. Students spent many weeks coming up with ideas, sketching, discussing and debating everything from big ideas for a youth zone to details around materiality, arts and storytelling



3.0 Outcomes

Key Themes

Several key themes for the design of the Thomas Jack Park Precinct emerged through discussions with participants from both OLSCC and DSHS, including:

- **Nature:** Across all sessions, the concept of incorporating nature into the design was a priority. The students emphasised that the design needs to be embedded in nature, enhancing the natural feel of the space through use of natural materials and planting.
- **First Nations Culture:** Representation of First Nations culture and history was frequently raised by students as an important feature for the park to incorporate through design elements to ensure cultural inclusivity and create opportunities to for indigenous storytelling.
- **Agriculture:** As we've heard through broader community engagement, including design elements and aesthetics relevant to Dalby's agricultural identity was a key topic to ensure design truly represents Dalby's identity.
- **Community Cohesion:** Students emphasised the need for the design to facilitate community cohesion by providing spaces that bring attract a wide range of community members.
- **Bunya Mountains:** The Bunya Mountains were discussed many times by students as a symbol of the Western Downs landscape, and as a place that they enjoyed going to feel connected to nature and to indigenous history. Many students came up with ways to reference or point to the Bunyas in their designs.
- **Accessibility:** Throughout the sessions, students mentioned that the design should enable easy access for all potential users including neuro-inclusive play and access for those with disabilities.
- **Chillout Spaces:** A repeating theme that was referenced by students was the need for secluded, private spaces for teens to occupy either together or alone that are embedded in nature. Teens especially talked about needing spaces that were separate from children's areas but also separate from adult areas. These students are at the challenging in-between age where traditional playgrounds are no longer of interest, but 'adult' spaces can still feel intimidating and unwelcoming. Having a dedicated 'teen zone' was a popular idea to ensure that these ages can feel a sense of ownership over their public space, and be sure that they're always welcome.
- **Opportunity to Make Memories:** While students noted the need to incorporate history into the design of Thomas Jack Park, they also voiced that they wanted space and freedom to create their own memories within the space.

Survey Results

To accurately identify the current youth sentiment relating to the park and opportunities for enhancement a survey was undertaken with participants from OLSCC, the survey results are captured in the table below.

Survey Results	
Question	Open-Ended Responses
Where do you feel welcome or not welcome in the current park?	- We don't feel safe in the park at nighttime. - It's just a 'place' – it is not inviting or exciting. - The playground is not suitable for people our age. - Don't feel unwelcome but don't feel welcome.
Whether it's daytime or nighttime, what would help you to feel safer in the park?	- More lighting. - Better atmosphere (including by hosting events). - Security cameras.
When you go to a playground what's your favourite part? Have you ever been to a playground that had cool elements you haven't seen anywhere else?	- High ropes. - Climbing structures. - Flying fox.
Thinking about the wider parkland space, what do you want to be able to do there?	- Relax in peaceful spaces including hidden pockets to hang out at. - Climbing and better playground structures. - Nice areas to walk in. - Places to eat.
If you're hanging out with your friends, do you want to be near other adults or younger kids?	- No – we want a place for ourselves.
What can you do in some other parks or play areas that you can't do in Dalby?	- Big slides, decent swings and climbing structures. - Shows and events. - Botanic garden / better gardens with information about plants.

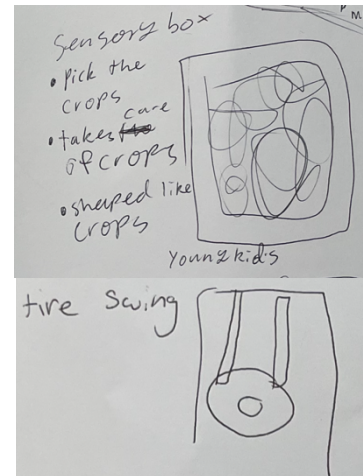
Design Ideas

Students developed a plethora of ideas for the design and activation of the Thomas Jack Park Precinct, these ideas relate both to the identity of Dalby and the aspirations of local youth.

Play & Activity

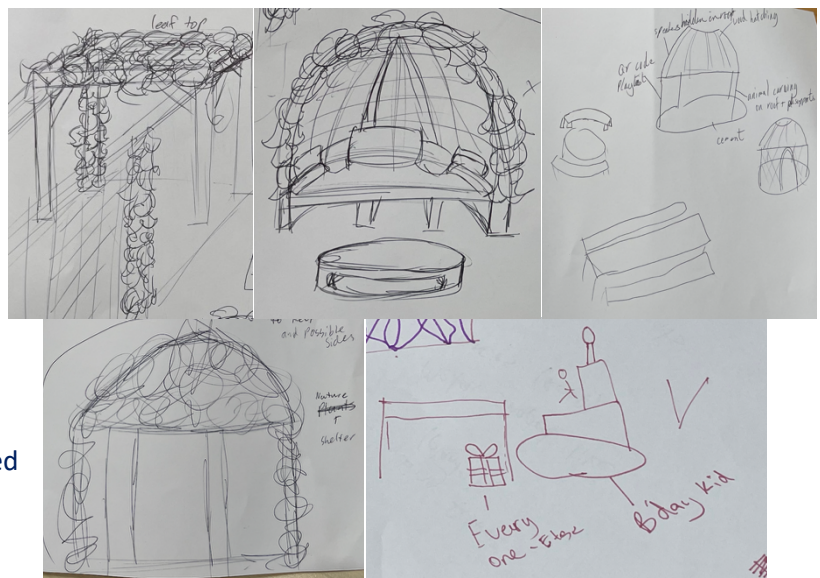
There was an array of recommendations for play and activity that were discussed, with a preference for play opportunities that cater to both older and younger children including:

- > A tyre swing using an old tractor tyre.
- > Bmx pump track
- > Sensory play that incorporates crops specific to the region.
- > Themed water play area.
- > 'Farm truck' inspired playground structure.



Shade Shelters & Structures

Shade shelters and structures were one of the most common mentions by students throughout all the sessions. The need for spaces where they can hang out with their friends and peers as well as alone was significant feature to them that they believe should be incorporated into the design. It was repetitively mentioned that shade structures / shelters should be embedded in nature and have the flexibility to host events.



Art & Pathways

Art and pathways throughout the precinct that incorporate First Nations history, agricultural history and general artistic element in general were recommended. This includes a cohesive network of pathways as well as interactive art that incorporates local information and / or interactive games such as a chess board.



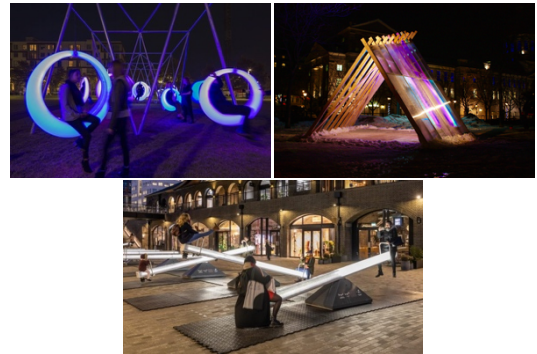
Teen 'Play'

Participants expressed desire for an amalgamation of traditional play equipment like swings and climbing structures with semi-hidden areas for social interaction or relaxing that could also serve as climbing structures / play equipment.



Creative Lighting

The students expressed keen interest in the inclusion of creative lighting, this was noted as a desirable inclusion for both enhanced safety as well as the general appeal that it provides.



'Hidden' in Nature

There was overwhelming support for design elements that are embedded in nature. This suggestion was repeatedly referenced throughout all of the sessions with students aspiring for spaces 'tucked away' and embedded in the natural elements of the park.



Youth Design Presentation

At the conclusion of the engagement process six students presented their ideas back to the project team that they developed during the sessions. Students framed their presentations across three key themes, active spaces, chillout spaces and look and feel. The results from the presentations are as follows:

Active Spaces

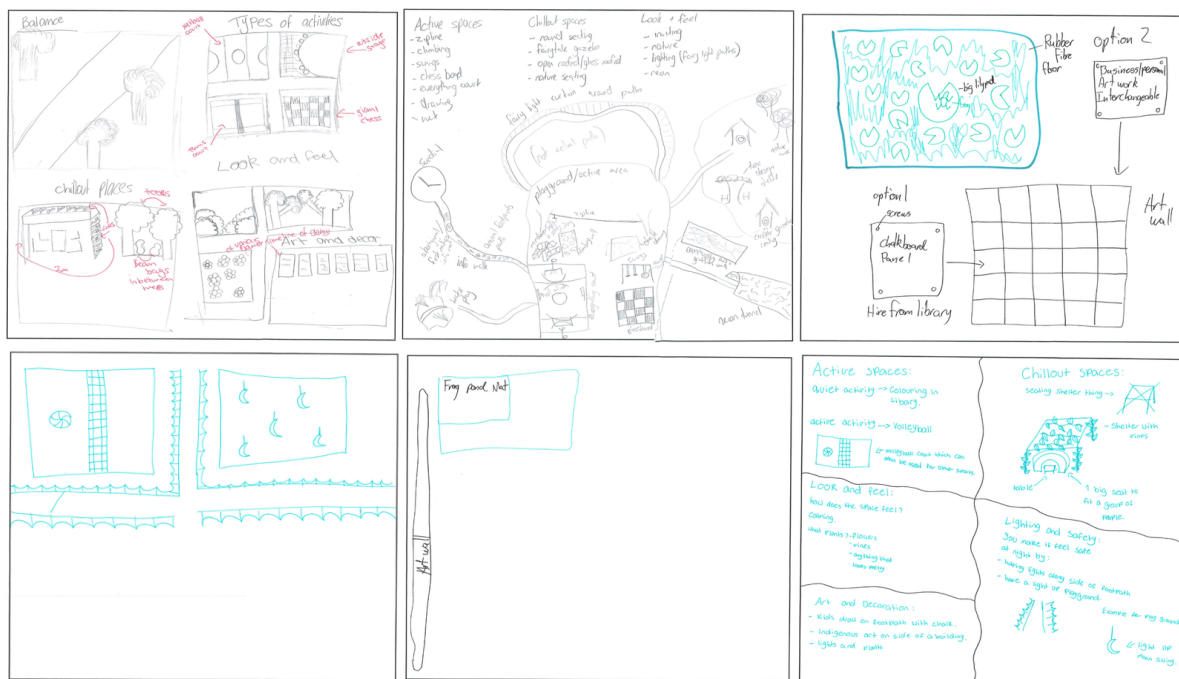
- > Play equipment including a zipline, climbing structures, swings, multi-purpose sports court, human size chess board.
- > A small-scale stage.
- > Interactive art wall that can also be used as a noticeboard.
- > Rubber floor with embedded lily pads or other locally significant elements.

Chillout Spaces

- > Gazebo with fairy lights and round seating.
- > Structure with a glass or open roof to view the sky.
- > Vines / natural elements incorporated wherever possible.

Look and Feel

- > Fairy lights and neon lighting on structures and along pathways.
- > Embedded in nature.
- > Inviting.
- > First Nations art and sculptures.
- > Chalkboard art wall.
- > Flowers, vines and other beautifying elements throughout.



4.0 Next Steps

The outcomes from this engagement process will be used by the project team to refine the design of the Thomas Jack Park Precinct.

5.0 Looking to the future

Throughout the engagement process over the past years, youth and teens have been not only interested but enthusiastic about being part of shaping this new asset for Dalby.

Whether it is through schools, youth groups or the Youth Action Panel, keeping youth involved in the design and activation of the future precinct will add huge value ensuring that this place is well-used and loved from the moment it opens.

