

Mangrove Creek Dam Visitor Space

CONSULTATION REPORT

March 2022



Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the engagement activities undertaken for Mangrove Creek Dam Visitor Space which was carried by Central Coast Council from 1 February to 11 March 2022.

The grant-funded project proposes to replace the original Mangrove Creek Dam Picnic Area facilities destroyed in the 2019 Three Mile Fire and provide new features to encourage visitation to the region including:

- new amenities block, viewing platforms and nature play space
- new picnic shelters, BBQs, bins and bench seating throughout
- new pathways, car park areas and access roads

This report documents the methods and approach of the engagement and provides an analysis of and response to community and stakeholder feedback during this phase.

What we heard

The community were invited to have their say on an interactive version of the concept designs with comments, discussions and reactions to the concept plan and its key features.

Council received a total of 95 comments and 536 reactions with 88 percent positive sentiment across the Mangrove Creek Dam Visitor Space concept plan and 94 percent support on its key features.

Key themes and issues raised throughout consultation include:

- Support for recognition of local indigenous culture and history
- Opportunities for recreational activities in the area
- Opportunities for facilities to support local tourism

Next steps

Council is currently using the feedback received to identify priorities and inform the final design which will be shared with the community. Construction of Mangrove Creek Dam Visitor Space is expected to be complete in June 2023*. Council will keep the community updated as the project progresses.

It's important to note that while we do our best to develop projects to meet the needs and requests of the community and stakeholders, technical constraints, costs, and the overarching project objectives must also be considered to deliver a project that is safe, functional and best balances the competing needs of all those affected including the environment. *COVID-19 associated delays, wet weather, market constraints and latent conditions may delay completion.



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Mangrove Creek Dam is a critical piece of infrastructure within the Central Coast water supply network, which services over 300,000 residents and is the third largest system in NSW.

The Mangrove Creek Dam catchments were significantly affected by the Three Mile Fire in December 2019, with RFS mapping indicating that 80 percent and 20 percent respectively of the catchment areas were burnt.

The fire also destroyed the Mangrove Creek Dam Picnic Area including the amenities building, fencing and information display boards. The loss of this Council asset has resulted in the area being closed to the public for close to one year and the area is currently being serviced by portable toilets to enable some form of public visitation.

The immediate need to replace the destroyed amenities building provides a perfect opportunity to revitalise the area to enhance tourism offering and contribute back to the local community.

Central Coast Council received \$2.567million from the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Fund to create a Visitor Space that encourages both locals and tourists to spend more time enjoying this beautiful area and support local businesses.

Council wanted to hear from the community on how to best represent the significance of this site, which is home to a critical piece of our region's water supply network and has a rich Indigenous and agriculture history.

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- Inform the community about grant-funded project
- Seek feedback on the project to inform the concept design
- Understand community values and preferences for the site



1.2 The project

Key features of the concept design for the new Visitor Space include:

- new amenities block
- new overhanging viewing platforms on two levels
- commemorative plaque
- proposed two level viewing platform at significant survey pillar and rock outcrop
- new picnic table shelters, bins and bench seating throughout
- edged new gravel and concrete pathways intersect and link the extents of the subject site and provide disabled access
- new soft native landscaping to car park and surrounding areas
- new plaques at pathway intersections and areas of interest containing directions, historical, natural and cultural facts/information
- new bitumen car park area and access roads
- existing trees and natural features to be retained where possible
- new shelters to existing and new BBQ areas
- pathway access to significant historic Stone Culvert
- new road access and parallel bus parking
- existing picnic areas to be refurbished with new low maintenance ground finish
- new pergola shelters provide weather protection and signpost the pathway circulation through the site
- new children's nature play space
- new adjacent picnic and BBQ area
- opportunity for mural to be featured.

The concept designs can be viewed in **Appendix A**.



2 Engagement approach

2.1 Aims and objectives

The purpose community engagement was to:

- Inform the community about the Mangrove Creek Dam picnic area upgrade
- Seek feedback on the concept designs to inform the final design
- Seek feedback on proposed key features to prioritise works
- Understand community preferences for the space
- Gather local knowledge and community values of the area

2.2 Our engagement framework

Consultation has been designed in accordance with Central Coast Council's Engagement Framework. This framework is available to view at: www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/Central-Coast-CouncilEngagement-Framework

The framework provides direction to effectively engage and communicate with the community and stakeholders and provides guidance on how to undertake engagement activities and what steps should be considered.

A place-based approach allows the community and Council to work more closely and collaboratively in practical engagement. Community involvement ensures balanced decision making through appropriate levels, timing, and methods of engagement.

Council's Engagement Framework ensures that community and stakeholder engagement is consistent and easy to understand to help inform people of an issue so they may decide whether to participate if they choose.

2.3 How we consulted

Consultation method

All project information and FAQs were hosted on <u>Your Voice Our Coast</u> where details of project officers are also available for any queries. During the consultation period, the community were invited to share their feedback via an <u>interactive mapping tool</u> where they were able to explore the suggested concept designs, comment on, like or dislike proposed features and raise ideas, issues, or suggestions. Feedback was accepted between 1 February and 11 March 2022. A screenshot of the interactive map can be found in **Appendix B**.

The purpose of this consultation method was to understand the preferences and sentiment of the local community and visitors to this area.



Promotional activities

We carried out promotion of the consultation to ensure the community and stakeholders were aware of the opportunity to participate.

Media Releases	1 February 2022
	A copy of the media release can be found in Appendix C
Media Coverage	 7 February 2022 <u>Central Coast Community News</u> 11 February 2022 ABC Central Coast 7.41am with Scott Levi
Print advertising	 4 February 2022 Mangrove Mountain and Districts Community News 9 February 2022 Coast Community Chronicle 16 February 2022 Printed poster promoted in Hub Café, Mangrove Mountain A copy of the print adverts can be found in Appendix D
Your Voice Our Coast website	 <u>Project page published</u> on 1 February 2022 with 438 visits <u>Interactive mapping tool</u> open 1 February to 11 March 2022
Social media posts	 Facebook posts on 1 February, 7 February and 18 February Instagram posts on 1 February, 7 February and 17 February Copies of social media posts can be found in Appendix E
eNewsletters	 9 February 2020 Coast Connect eNews Feature Sent to 11,468 recipients 24 February 2020 Direct Email to Engagement Mailing List Sent to 2,152 recipients Copies of the eNewsletters can be found in Appendix F



3 What we heard

3.1 Results

Council invited the community to provide feedback on the concept designs and 18 key features (amenities, pathways etc.) on the interactive tool between 1 February and 11 March 2022.

Community comments

Community comments were added freely on the interactive concept design or as discussion points under existing comments or key features.

A total of 66 community comments were made on the interactive concept design during the consultation period, receiving a total of 217 reactions with 172 up votes and 45 down votes.

Common themes identified in the comments included:

- Recognition of local indigenous culture and history
- Recreational opportunities
- Tourism opportunities

See Figure 1 Frequency of common themes mentioned

Key features

Key features were plotted on the interactive concept design as information markers for the community to vote and comment on.

The 18 key features received a total of 319 reactions with 299 up votes and 20 down votes as well as 29 comments added to the discussion section under each feature.

Key features most supported by the community included:

- Existing trees and natural features to be retained where possible
- New shelters to existing and new BBQ areas
- New picnic table shelters, bins and bench seating throughout
- Proposed two level viewing platform at significant survey pillar and rock outcrop

Key features most discussed by the community included:

- Opportunity for mural to be featured
- New amenities block
- New bitumen car park area and access roads

See Figure 2 Community feedback on key features



Figure 1

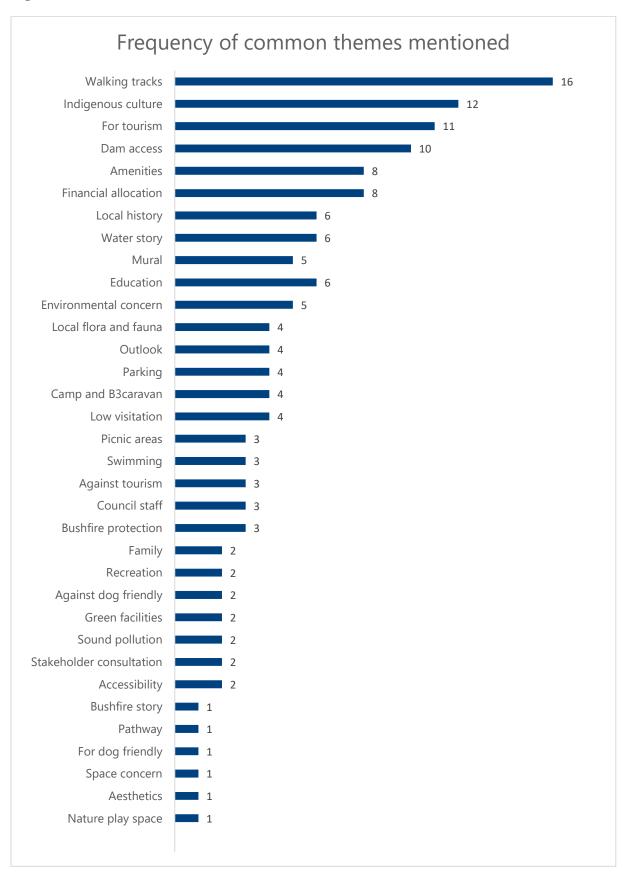
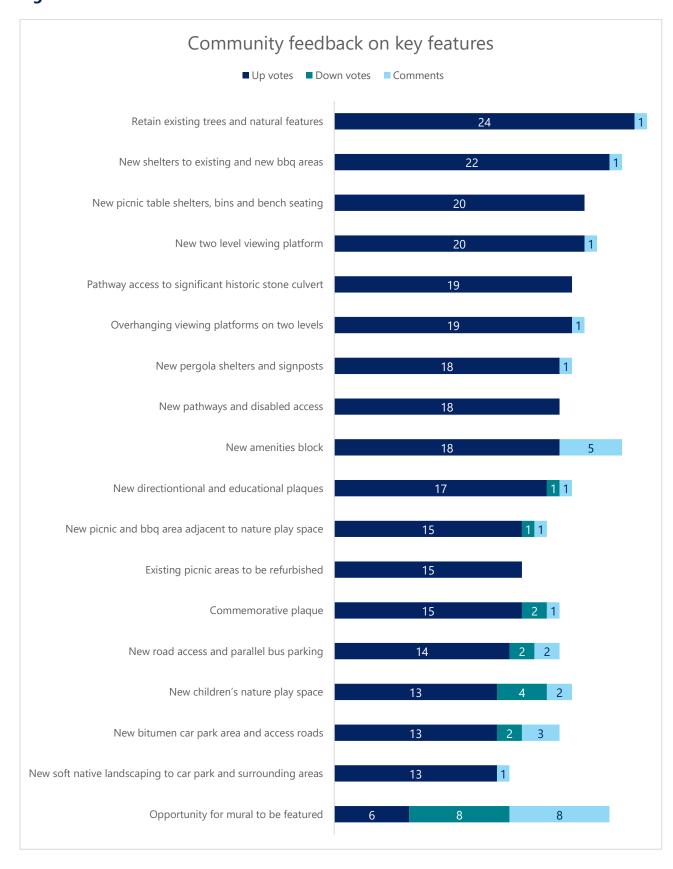




Figure 2



Totals: 29 Comments 299 Upvotes 18 Downvotes = 94% positive feedback votes on key features



3.2 Sample of comments from consultation

Below is a sample of comments respondents provided via the interactive map:

Highest community voted comments

"This all looks great but if possible, we would like some bushwalking tracks. The main reason we don't go there very often is (because) there's only really a place to sit and see the view. That's great too but some (walks) would be nice. Thanks! (We are residents of the mountain community)"

"A walking trail incorporating the rich indigenous history and cultural sights around the area is needed"

"Some decent toilets would be great, and some mobile reception, under cover picnic area with a gas BBQ so you can have a birthday or get together. A dedication to the aboriginals who lived in this area"

Recognition of local indigenous culture and history

"There needs to be discussion of the Aboriginal use of the site and the region, the history of the dam and the bushfire story"

"A dedication to the aboriginals who lived in this area"

"It would be great to have a school education building with appropriate discovery activities so teachers could conduct excursions. Areas of study: environment, indigenous, water, local history."

"Must include the indigenous use of this land utilised for a dam as a historic access link to and from the Hunter Valley, which connected/commenced at the entry point of Mangrove Creek. This corridor to the Hunter Valley was known by Aboriginals and shown in the early years of Hawkesbury settlement to John McDonald."

Recreational & tourism opportunities

"One of the reasons why the Blue Mountains is such a tourism success is because there is somewhere to walk after you have taken in the view... if access to the dam is not possible, then at least a loop track to take in more of the views and beautiful nature around the dam."

"Needs to become more of a destination - every time we have been there, we wanted to take a walk to see more of the dam and maybe even access the dam via a walking trail."

"A couple of bush walks starting and finishing at the picnic area would be ideal... These walks could incorporate indigenous cultural features as well as natural environmental features. The views up the water would be tremendous."

"If the track could be a man-made durable material boardwalk so no impact to the environment and a more pleasurable all weather walk would be more attractive to visitors and easier to maintain."

"As Sydney becomes more congested we need more areas like this that can be easy day trips away from our more populated areas"

"To prompt visitors add a point of interest to Google such as a sculpture like the 3m laughing owl by Peter Rush in Kulnura."



3.3 Key findings from consultation

The below topics where highly engaged on and greatly valued by the community:

- Recreational opportunities such as walking tracks to be installed in the area
- Recognition of local indigenous culture and additional educational opportunities
- Visitation opportunities such as new BBQ shelters, viewing platforms and accessibility
- Retention of existing trees, natural features and smart allocation of project funding

Council's response to these themes can be found in **Section 4**.



4 Council's response

Due to the large volume and variety of content contained within community feedback, not every issue or theme was able to be included and responded to in the following table, however all feedback has been read and has been considered by the project team.

Table A Issues and responses

Theme	Topic	Council's response
Recreation	Walking tracks	Mangrove Creek Dam is a closed catchment area meaning that many areas are not publicly accessible in order to protect the natural environment, local wildlife and the Central Coast's supply of drinking water. Walking tracks are therefore limited due to the above constraints coupled with the steep terrain in this area. The public will be able to access the picnic area, visitors centre and short walks to viewing platforms.
Recreation	Dam access	Central Coast Council provides a potable water supply service to the approximately 300,000 residents on the Central Coast. Key components of the water supply system include Mangrove Creek Dam, Mangrove Creek Weir and their associated catchments. The Mangrove Creek Dam site is a closed catchment area meaning there is no public access to the dam in order to protect the Central Coast's water supply.
Education	Indigenous culture	Recognition of local indigenous culture and history will be taken into consideration when developing educational content for indoor and outdoor areas in the visitor space. Consultation with the traditional custodians of the area is a priority for the project team when developing cultural content and acknowledgements for the space.
Education	Visitor centre	Strong community feedback relating to educational uses for this space were considered by the project team who are planning to include interactive educational resources relating to the water story and indigenous history of the area.

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Visitation	New facilities to drive visitation	The NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) funded project provides an opportunity to create a space that helps to drive tourism for the Coast's mountain and hinterland regions. The upgraded and additional facilities such as picnic areas, visitor centre and viewing platform will drive visitation and make use of accessible parking spaces.
Project	Natural retention	During this consultation, the community expressed (via Up Votes on key features on the interactive plan) that the retention of existing trees and natural features was a key priority. The project team has taken this feedback into consideration and has updated the project scope to retain natural assets and features wherever possible.
Project	Financial allocation	Central Coast Council received \$2.567million from the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Fund to create a Visitor Space that encourages both locals and tourists to spend more time enjoying this beautiful area and support local businesses. Since the 2009 concept plans were designed, Council has already built one of the platforms (left of plan) allowing spend to be reallocated to community priorities such as upgraded facilities and education. Council has also identified amendments to the original project scope and has undertaken a descoping exercise by 25% to bring the 2009 plans in line with 2022 material and labour costs and allocated budget. Throughout this process, the project team has taken all community feedback into consideration, ensuring key priorities are accounted for in the final designs. These will be available for the community to view once completed and Council will keep the community updated as the project progresses.



5 Next steps

Council is currently using the feedback received from the community to guide the priorities for key features and inform the development of the final revised Concept Design for the Mangrove Creek Dam Visitor Space.

The project team has undertaken a descoping process by 25% to bring the 2009 plans in line with 2022 material and labour costs and the allocated budget.

Throughout this process, the project team have also taken all community feedback provided during the consultation period into consideration, ensuring key priorities are accounted for in the final revised Concept Design.

These will be available for the community to view once completed and Council will keep the community updated on the consultation page as the project progresses.

Construction of Mangrove Creek Dam Visitor Space is expected to be complete in June 2023*

It's important to note that while we do our best to develop projects to meet the needs and requests of the community and stakeholders, technical constraints, costs, and the overarching project objectives must also be considered to deliver a project that is safe, functional and best balances the competing needs of all those affected including the environment.

*COVID-19 associated delays, wet weather, market constraints and latent conditions may delay completion.



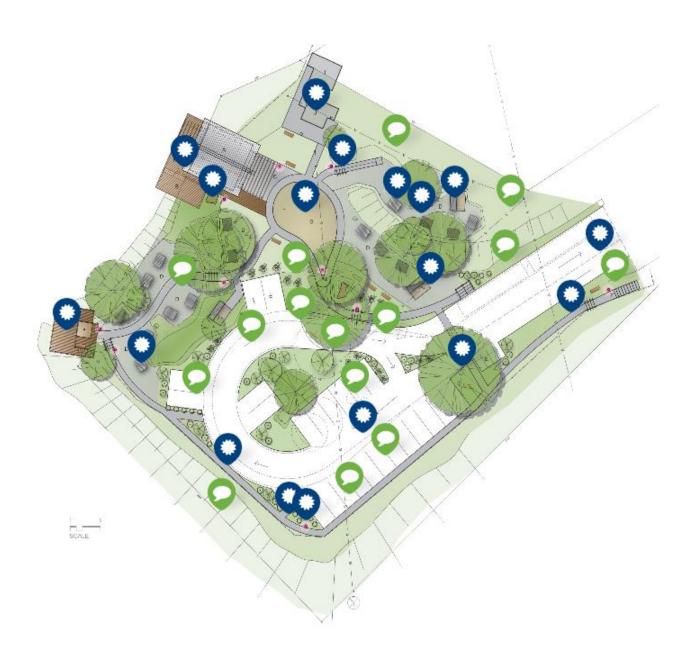
6 Appendices

Appendix A – Mangrove Creek Dam Concept Designs





Appendix B – Interactive Concept Design





Appendix C – Media Release

1 February 2022

Help shape the new Visitor Space at Mangrove Creek Dam

Community members are invited to share their values, stories and aspirations associated with the Mangrove Creek Dam picnic area, lookout and surrounds to influence the design of an exciting new Visitor Space at this significant site.

Featuring a new amenities building, an improved picnic area and educational elements, the new Visitor Space will replace the original facilities destroyed in the 2019 Three Mile Fire.

Central Coast Council has received \$2.567million from the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Fund to complete this important project.

Council Director Water and Sewer, Jamie Loader said the new Visitor Space will play a key role in supporting locals who were significantly affected by the Three Mile and Gospers Mountain Fires.

"Here on the Coast it was community members in our mountain and hinterland regions who were hardest hit by the devasting fires of 2019-20," Mr Loader said.

"The fires posed a threat to life, property and environment, and local businesses faced reduced patronage for an extended period of time.

"Our visitor facilities at Mangrove Creek Dam were completely destroyed in the Three Mile Fire and we are seeking to create a new Visitor Space that encourages both locals and tourists to spend more time enjoying this beautiful area and supporting local businesses.

"We are keen to hear from our community on how to best represent the significance of this site, which is home to a critical piece of our region's water supply network and has a rich Indigenous and agricultural history."

Council Administrator, Rik Hart said the project provides an opportunity to create a space that helps to drive tourism for the Coast's mountain and hinterland regions.

"Thanks to this important NSW Government funding we have an opportunity to not only rebuild the Mangrove Creek Dam facilities we lost to the devasting Three Mile Fire but to create an improved space for both locals and visitors to enjoy.

"A trip to Mangrove Creek Dam does not disappoint – is a spectacular site to behold and is nestled within beautiful bushland and alongside the Coast's stunning hinterland region.

"I encourage community members to have their say on how our new Visitor Space can feature the values and history of this site and enhance linkages with other tourism offerings."



Key features of the concept design for the new visitor space include:

- new amenities block
- new overhanging viewing platforms on two levels
- commemorative plaque
- proposed two level viewing platform at significant survey pillar and rock outcrop
- new picnic table shelters, bins and bench seating throughout
- new gravel and concrete pathways around the site including disabled access
- new soft native landscaping to car park and surrounding areas
- new plaques at pathway intersections and areas of interest containing directions, historical, natural and cultural facts/information
- new bitumen car park area and access roads
- existing trees and natural features to be retained where possible
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- pathway access to significant historic Stone Culvert
- new road access and parallel bus parking
- existing picnic areas to be refurbished with new low maintenance ground finish
- new pergola shelters provide weather protection and signpost the pathway circulation through the site
- new children's nature play space
- new adjacent picnic and BBQ area
- opportunity for mural to be featured.

Community members can have their say until Friday 11 March 2022 by visiting <u>yourvoiceourcoast.com/MCDvisitorspace</u>

ENDS



Appendix D - Print Advertising



Help shape an exciting new Visitor Space at Mangrove Creek Dam by sharing your ideas, thoughts and stories associated with the picnic area, lookout and surrounds.

Following the destruction of the original facilities in the 2019 Three Mile Fire, Central Coast Council has received \$2.567million from the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Fund to complete this important project.

The new Visitor Space will feature a new amenities building, an improved picnic area and educational elements, and will enhance linkages with other tourism offerings in the area.

We are keen to hear from our community on how to represent this significant site, which is home to a critical piece of our region's water supply network and has a rich Indigenous and agricultural history.

Have your say until Friday 11 March 2022 by visiting

yourvoiceourcoast.com/MCDvisitorspace

yourvoiceourcoast.com

Have your say on new-look dam picnic area

Residents have been invited to share their values, stories and appirations associated with the Mangrove Creek Dam picaic area, lookout and surrounds to influence the design of a new Visitor Space at the significant site.

Featuring a new amenities building, an upgraded pionic area and educational elements, the new Visitor Space will reptace the original facilities destroyed in the 2019 Three Mile Fire.

Central Coast Council has received \$2.567M from the NSW Government's Bushfree Local Economic Recovery (SLER) Fund to complete the project.

Council Director Water and Sewer, Jamile Loader, said the new Vasitor Space will play a key role in supporting locals were significantly affected by the Three Mile and Guspers Mountain Fiers.

"Here on the Crast it was community members in our mountain and hinterland



Mangreso Creek Dam picnic area

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"Thanks to this important NSW Government funding we have an opportunity to not only rebuild the Mangrove Creek Dam tacilities we lost to the devastating Three Mile Fire but to create an improved space for both locats and visitors to enjoy." he said.

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Key features of the concept design for the new visitor space lockude: a new amendiles block, overhanging viewing platforms on two levels; commemorative and informative plaques; refurtished picole; and tarbecue areas; new gravel and concrete pathways and landscaping, new bitumen car park area and access stocks; and a new children's nature play space.

Trees and shrubs are to be retained where possible and there is an opportunity for a mutal to be leatured.

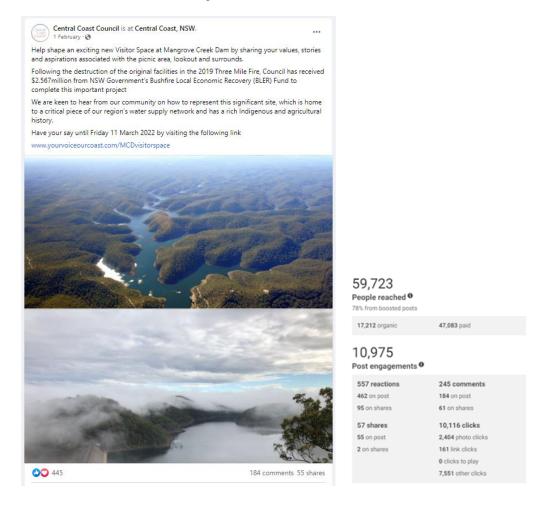
Community members can have their say until Friday, March 11 by visiting yourvoiceourcoast.com/ MCOvistorspace.

> Media release, Feb 7 Central Coast Council

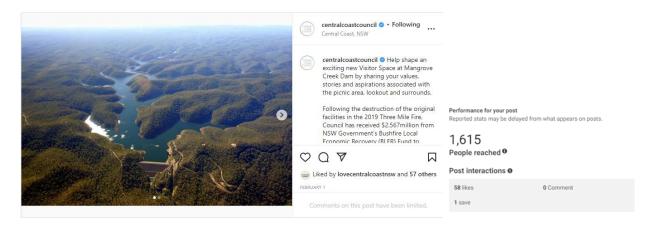


Appendix E – Social Media Posts

Facebook Post 1 February 2022

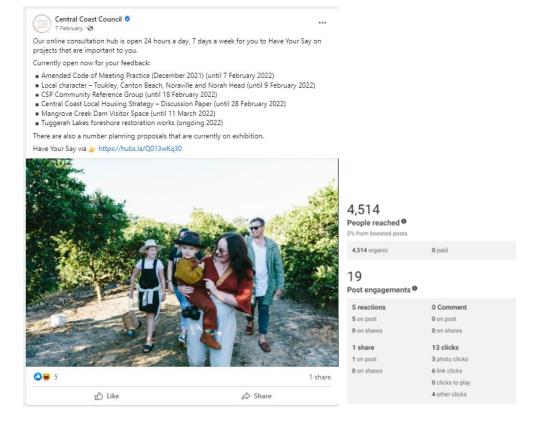


Instagram Post 1 February 2022

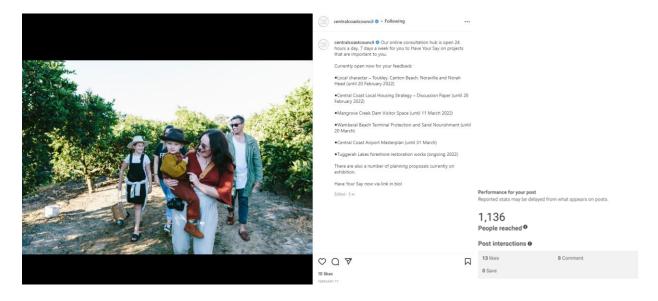




Facebook Post 7 February 2022

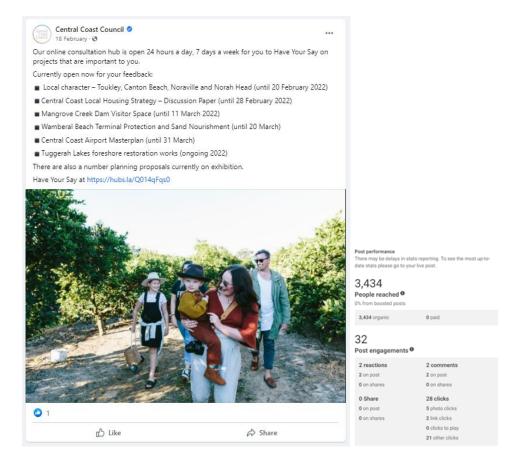


Instagram Post 7 February 2022

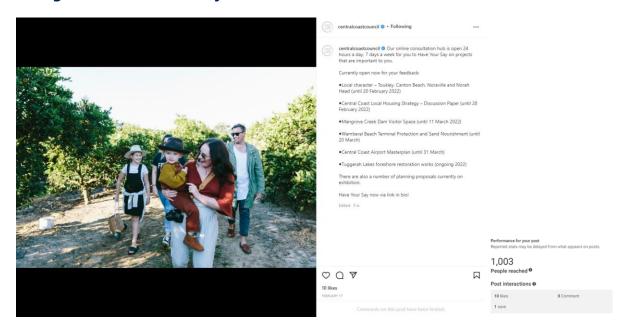




Facebook Post 18 February 2022



Instagram Post 17 February 2022





Appendix F – eNewsletters

Coast Connect Feature – 9 February 2022





Share ideas for Visitor Space at Mangrove Creek Dam

You're invited to help shape an exciting new Visitor Space at Mangrove Creek Dam by sharing your ideas, thoughts and stories associated with the picnic area, lookout and surrounds. This will replace the original facilities destroyed in the 2019 Three Mile Fire.

Have your say >

Direct eNews to Engagement Mailing List - 24 February 2022





Help shape new Visitor Space at Mangrove Creek Dam

You're invited to help shape an exciting new Visitor Space at Mangrove Creek Dam by sharing your ideas, thoughts and stories associated with the picnic area, lookout and surrounds.

This will replace the original facilities destroyed in the 2019 Three Mile Fire, with Council receiving \$2.567million from NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Fund to complete this important project

We are keen to hear from our community on how to represent this significant site, which is home to a critical piece of our region's water supply network and has a rich Indigenous and agricultural history.

Feedback will be accepted until Friday 11 March 2022.

Have Your Say